



# HIST 212

## U.S. History 1865 to Present

Instructed by Dr. June Klees

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# RECONSTRUCTION

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## Reconstruction in Theme Analysis

The Era of Reconstruction was the time when the US physically reunited post-Civil War. This physical reunion meant that the country proceeded along the Hamiltonian, industrial-vision for America. It meant that the country could grow and expand both geographically and industrial-economically. The greatest theme-related advancements of the era were the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. However, the benefits of those amendments and other related legislation of the era would not be realized until the 20th century. The Radical Republicans themselves serve as an example of a group willing to use federal power to achieve their goals; however, in the short-term they failed to secure the rights of African Americans.

## A Question of Equality

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed the Confederacy's slaves. African-Americans rejoiced when northern troops liberated their plantations. Many blacks immediately started the search for family members, while others followed Union troops, being called "contraband." Some blacks cautiously started to look for good employers out of the pool of ex-slave owners now desperate for workers. Ultimately the Freedmen desired two things: opportunities for education and to own their own land. Unfortunately, their fate was in the hands of the whites in power and

when ex-Confederates regain control in the South many of the freedmen's hopes and dreams were shattered.

## The Amendments

Before Reconstruction started, Radical Republicans (abolitionists before and during the Civil War) pushed Constitutional amendments through Congress to guarantee the rights of emancipated slaves. These "Radicals" were responsible for the Emancipation proclamation and thus wanted to ensure the freedmen's rights, constitutionally. The 13th Amendment of 1865 abolished slavery in the United States. The 14th Amendment of 1868 defined citizenship (explicitly male), and the 15th Amendment of 1870 guaranteed black voting rights. But, the situation was complex and southern whites did not take well to these amendments.

## The Reaction

Whites reacted with hostility formally and informally to the amendments. Once ex-Confederates got back into power in the South, they passed the Jim Crow laws (or Black Codes) to define the social status of the freedmen and to control them as a labor force. According to some of the laws, blacks had to carry passes, observe curfews, and live in housing provided by a landowner. Other restrictions that were implemented were strict vagrancy laws, restrictive labor contracts that bound the black worker to plantations,

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exclusions from schools and state institutions, and voting restrictions. Lastly, violent reactions were commonplace. The Ku Klux Klan started in 1867 as a Confederate veterans group, but it quickly turned into a terrorist organization, targeting blacks and Republicans. Such persons were harassed, whipped, beaten, and murdered. The KKK included many ex-Confederates of various socio-economic backgrounds and was particularly active around election times, when blacks wanted to exercise their right to vote.

## The Politics of Reconstruction/ The Plans

During the Civil War, different interpretations emerged on how to politically reunite the nation. The Radical Republicans and their supporters wanted the South to pay for leaving the Union, while at the same time protecting the rights of the freedmen. More conservative individuals, like Presidents Lincoln and Johnson as well as the Northern Democrats, wanted the nation reunited as quickly as possible and with minimal humiliation to the South. The various plans proposed and the support for or against them caused tremendous political tensions.

### Plan A - The 10% Plan:

This was Lincoln's plan, and it let states back into the Union when 10% of the number of eligible voters from the 1860 election had taken a loyalty oath to the Union.

### Plan B - The Wade-Davis Bill:

This was the Radical Republican plan for reunion. It was a harsh bill wanting the South to pay for being traitors to the Union. It let states back in when 50% of the number of eligible voters from the 1860 election had sworn to the "IRON CLAD OATH," stating that they never had voluntarily served the Confederacy. This bill was pocket-vetoed by Lincoln, thus angering the Radicals.

### Plan C - The Johnson Plan:

President Andrew Johnson's plan was very similar to Lincoln's. It initially had a provision to keep the wealthy ex-slave holders out of political power in the South by not allowing them to take a loyalty oath. It was put into action. And, provisional governors were appointed to the ex-Confederate states. They were to oversee the writing of new state constitutions that eliminated both slavery and secession as a legal option. However, for political reasons Johnson pardoned the ex-slave owners that he initially wanted to punish. As a result, these ex-Confederates regained power and thus implemented laws limiting the rights of the freedmen.

### Plan D - The Reconstruction Act of 1867:

This was the Radical Republican's second attempt at a reunification plan, and it was in direct opposition to Johnson's plan. The act was passed to re-establish military authority over the South, in contrast to Johnson's plan, by creating five military districts to govern it. The act tried to ensure the freedmen's right to vote

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by insisting that new state constitutions had to guarantee it. It also required that the states ratify the 14th Amendment in order to be readmitted to the Union with congressional approval.

## The Politics of Reconstruction Other Issues

To counter Johnson's plans, the Radicals refused to let ex-Confederates take their seats in Congress and the House and Senate formed a joint committee to investigate Johnson's reconstruction policies. They advised that Congress pass the Reconstruction Act of 1867, as mentioned above, and for Congress to pass protective legislation to help the freedmen.

### Example A:

The Freedmen's Bureau was created in 1866 to help the freedmen make the transition from slavery to freedom. The organization fed the hungry, provided clothing, negotiated labor contracts, helped freedmen obtain land, and started schools. However, later due to funding cuts, the Bureau closed.

### Example B:

The Civil Rights Bill was passed in 1866 to guarantee the rights of freedmen.

### Example C:

The Radicals decided to take on the root of their problems, Johnson. Desiring to remove him from office, they passed the Tenure of Office Act in 1867

which said that just as a president needed congressional approval for appointees, he also had to obtain it to fire an appointee. The law made sense, but was timely because Johnson intended to fire Radical Republican, Edwin Stanton, from his position as Secretary of War. The House of Representatives indicted him for "high crimes and misdemeanors" and he went on trial in the Senate. Johnson was acquitted of the charges, but by that time and with only a few months left in his term, he could do little administratively. This was the effect the Radicals desired, and for the time they moved forward with their plans for reconstruction unopposed.

## The Failure of Radical Reconstruction

Due to the climate in the generation after the Civil War, it probably was inevitable that the political reunion of the nation would be a success but that the Radical Republican goals for the freedmen would be a failure. What happened to make their dreams, and those of the freedmen, die an early death?

### Time:

As time went on Americans grew tired of the process and wanted to see the business of reunion completed. The public also became preoccupied with other issues apart from Reconstruction, such as the economy.

### Financial issues:

Disputes over currency and a financial panic in 1873 drew the nation's attention away from reconstruction.

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Millions of people were out of work, and that instead was the focal point of political discussions and actions.

## Political Dissension:

The Liberal Republicans split with the radical wing of the party, and in 1872 they ran Horace Greeley independently for president. And, overall the Liberal Republicans and general public were dissatisfied with President Grant's administration, thus further splitting the party and hurting the Radical's agenda for reconstruction. This allowed the Democrats to gain numbers in Congress, meaning that they were able to disable the Radical's plans. They passed an Amnesty Act, pardoning the remaining ex-rebels, and resultantly Democrats took back control in all but three of the former Confederate states.

## The Supreme Court:

The Supreme Court made rulings on court cases that challenged the authority of the 14th and 15th amendments. The court had many southerners on it, and they were anything BUT sympathetic to the plight of the freedmen. Cumulatively, the case rulings resulted in the following:

1. Military occupation of the South was undermined.
2. Radical goals of nationalizing civil rights and guarding against state interference with civil rights were destroyed.

3. State and national citizenship were declared as being separate.
4. The 14th Amendment was interpreted so that it did not empower the federal government with the right to prosecute whites who denied blacks their civil rights. It was ruled that only the states had the right so to do.
5. The 15th Amendment was interpreted so that it did not guarantee the right to vote but simply listed the conditions under which it was not permissible to deny suffrage. **THUS**, these particular court rulings allowed Southern states to disenfranchise blacks (who were already voting and in elected offices) for supposedly non-racial reasons. For example, states denied voting via literacy tests, property requirements, and the grandfather clause, which stated that a person only had the right to vote if their grandfather did before 1867. The combination of any of these led to the elimination of black voters, while still allowing lower-class whites to vote.

## The Election of 1876:

The Election of 1876 was the final nail in the coffin that the Supreme Court had built for the Radical's reconstruction plans. In this election, Republican Rutherford Hayes of Ohio won a disputed election over Democrat Samuel Tilden of New York. As per the Constitution, the vote had gone to Congress, where a deal was struck. The Democrats would accept

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Hayes as winner if he agreed as president to withdraw federal troops from the South, ending the military occupation. Hayes agreed, won the election, and Reconstruction officially ended in 1877.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

# THE AMERICAN YAWP

## RECONSTRUCTION



*“Contrabands,” Cumberland Landing, Virginia, 1862, via [Library of Congress](#).*

## I. Introduction

After the Civil War, much of the South lay in ruins. “It passes my comprehension to tell what became of our railroads,” one South Carolinian told a Northern reporter. “We had passably good roads, on which we could reach almost any part of the State, and the next week they were all gone – not simply broken up, but gone. Some of the material was burned, I know, but miles and miles of iron have actually disappeared, gone out of existence.” He might as well have been talking about the entire antebellum way of life. The future of the South was uncertain. How would these states be brought back into the Union? Would they be conquered territories or equal states? How would they rebuild their governments, economies, and social sys-

tems? What rights did freedom confer upon formerly enslaved people?

The answers to many of Reconstruction’s questions hinged upon the concepts of citizenship and equality. The era witnessed perhaps the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation’s founding. It was a moment of revolutionary possibility and violent backlash. African Americans and Radical Republicans pushed the nation to finally realize the Declaration of Independence’s promises that “all men were created equal” and had “certain, unalienable rights.” Conservative white Democrats granted African Americans legal freedom but little more. When black Americans and their radical allies succeeded in securing citizenship for freedpeople, a new



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fight commenced to determine the legal, political, and social implications of American citizenship. Resistance continued, and Reconstruction eventually collapsed. In the South, limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more.

## II. Politics & Reconstruction

Reconstruction—the effort to restore southern states to the Union and to redefine African Americans’ place in American society—began before the Civil War ended. President Abraham Lincoln began planning for the reunification of the United States in the fall of 1863. With a sense that Union victory was imminent and that he could turn the tide of the war by stoking Unionist support in the Confederate states, Lincoln issued a proclamation allowing Southerners to take an oath of allegiance. When just ten percent of a state’s voting population had taken such an oath, loyal Unionists could then establish governments. These so-called Lincoln governments sprang up in pockets where Union support existed like Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Unsurprisingly, these were also the places that were exempted from the liberating effects of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Initially proposed as a war aim, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation committed the United States to the abolition of slavery. However, the Proclamation freed only slaves in areas of rebellion and left more than 700,000 in bondage in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri as well as Union-occupied areas of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia.



*With the war coming to an end, the question of how to reunite the former Confederate states with the Union was a divisive one. Lincoln’s Presidential Reconstruction plans were seen by many, including Radical Republicans in Congress, to be too tolerant towards what they considered to be traitors. This political cartoon reflects this viewpoint, showing Lincoln and Johnson happily stitching the Union back together with little anger towards the South. Joseph E. Baker, “The ‘Rail Splitter’ at Work Repairing the Union,” 1865. [Library of Congress](#).*

To cement the abolition of slavery, however, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865 and legally abolished slavery “except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” Section Two of the amendment granted Congress the “power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.” State ratification followed, and by the end of the year the requisite three-fourths states had approved the amendment, and four million blacks were forever free from the slavery that had existed in North America for 250 years.

Lincoln’s policy was lenient and conservative, but Reconstruction was recast when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, during a performance of “Our American Cousin” at the Ford Theater.

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Treated rapidly and with all possible care, Lincoln succumbed to his wounds the following morning, leaving a somber pall over the North and especially among African Americans.

Lincoln's policy was lenient and conservative, but Reconstruction was recast when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, during a performance of "Our American Cousin" at the Ford Theater. Treated rapidly and with all possible care, Lincoln succumbed to his wounds the following morning, leaving a somber pall over the North and especially among African Americans.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln propelled Vice President Andrew Johnson into the executive office in April 1865. Johnson, a states' rights, strict-constructionist and unapologetic racist from Tennessee, offered southern states a quick restoration into the Union. His Reconstruction plan required provisional southern governments to void their ordinances of secession, repudiate their Confederate debts, and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. On all other matters, the conventions could do what they wanted with no federal interference. He pardoned all Southerners engaged in the rebellion with the exception of wealthy planters who possessed more than \$20,000 in property. The southern aristocracy would have to appeal to Johnson for individual pardons. In the meantime, Johnson hoped that a new class of Southerners would replace the extremely wealthy in leadership positions.



*While no one could agree on what the best plan for reconstructing the nation would be, Americans understood the moment as critical and perhaps revolutionary. In this magnificent visual metaphor for the reconciliation of the North and South, John Lawrence postulates what might result from reunion. Reconstruction, the print seems to argue, will form a more perfect Union that upholds the ideals of the American Revolution, most importantly (as seen on a streaming banner near the top) that "All men are born free and equal." John Giles Lawrence, "Reconstruction," 1867. [Library of Congress](#).*

Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate black behavior and impose social and economic control. These laws granted some rights to African Americans – like the right to own property, to marry or to make contracts – they also denied them fundamental rights. White lawmakers forbade black men from serving on juries or in state militias, refused to recognize black testimony against white people, apprenticed orphan children to their former masters, and established severe vagrancy laws. Mississippi's vagrant law required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment. If they had



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no proof, they could be arrested and fined. If they could not pay the fine, the sheriff had the right to hire out his prisoner to anyone who was willing to pay the tax. Similar ambiguous vagrancy laws throughout the South reasserted control over black labor in what one scholar has called “slavery by another name.” Black codes effectively criminalized black leisure, limited their mobility, and locked many into exploitative farming contracts. Attempts to restore the antebellum economic order largely succeeded.

These laws and outrageous mob violence against southern blacks led Republicans to call for a more punitive process for southern states to be reinstated to the Union. So when Johnson announced that the southern states had been restored to the Union, Republicans in Congress refused to seat southern delegates from the newly reconstructed states.

Republicans in Congress responded with a spate of legislation aimed at protecting freedmen and restructuring political relations in the South. Many Republicans were keen to grant voting rights for freed men in order to build a new powerful voting bloc. Some Republicans, like United States Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, believed in racial equality, but the majority understood that the only way to protect Republican interests in the South was to give the vote to the hundreds of thousands of black men. Republicans in Congress responded to the codes with the Civil Rights Act of 1866—the first federal attempt to constitutionally define all American-born residents (except Native



*With the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, droves of African American men went to the polls to exercise their newly recognized right to vote. In this Harper's Weekly print, black men of various occupations wait patiently for their turn as the first voter submits his ballot. Unlike other contemporary images that depicted African Americans as ignorant, unkempt, and lazy, this print shows these black men as active citizens. Alfred R. Waud, "The First Vote," November 1867. [Library of Congress](#).*

peoples) as citizens and which prohibited any curtailment of citizens' “fundamental rights.”

The Fourteenth Amendment developed concurrently with the Civil Rights Act to ensure its constitutionality. The House of Representatives approved the Fourteenth Amendment on June 13, 1866. Section One granted citizenship and repealed the Taney Court's infamous *Dred Scott* (1857) decision. Moreover, it ensured that state laws could not deny due process or discriminate against particular groups of people. The Fourteenth Amendment signaled the federal government's willingness to enforce the Bill of Rights over the authority of the states.

Based on his belief that African Americans did not deserve rights, President Johnson opposed both the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment and vetoed the

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Civil Rights Act, as he believed black Americans did not deserve citizenship. With a two-thirds majority gained in the 1866 midterm elections, Republicans overrode the veto, and in 1867, they passed the first of two Reconstruction Acts, which dissolved state governments and divided the South into five military districts. Before states could rejoin the Union, they would have to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, write new constitutions enfranchising African Americans, and abolish black codes. The Fourteenth Amendment was finally ratified on July 9, 1868.

In the 1868 Presidential election, former Union General Ulysses S. Grant ran on a platform that proclaimed, “Let Us Have Peace” in which he promised to protect the new status quo. On the other hand, the Democratic candidate, Horatio Seymour, promised to repeal Reconstruction. Black Southern voters’ support for Grant helped him win most of the former Confederacy.

Reconstruction brought the first moment of mass participation of African Americans. In 1860, only five states in the North allowed African Americans to vote on equal terms with whites. Yet after 1867, when Congress ordered Southern states to eliminate racial discrimination in voting, African Americans began to win elections across the South. In a short time, the South was transformed from an all-white, pro-slavery, Democratic stronghold to a collection of Republican-led states with African Americans in positions of power for the first time in American history.



*The era of Reconstruction witnessed a few moments of true progress. One of those was the election of African Americans to local, state, and national offices, including both houses of Congress. Pictured here are Hiram Revels (the first African American Senator) alongside six black representatives, all from the former Confederate states. Currier & Ives, “First Colored Senator and Representatives in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States,” 1872. [Library of Congress](#), LC-DIG-ppmsca-17564.*

Through the provisions of the Congressional Reconstruction Acts, black men voted in large numbers and also served as delegates to the state constitutional conventions in 1868. Black delegates actively participated in revising state constitutions. One of the most significant accomplishments of these conventions was the establishment of a public school system. While public schools were virtually nonexistent in the antebellum period, by the end of Reconstruction, every Southern state had established a public school system. Republican officials opened state institutions like mental asylums, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons to white and black residents, though often on a segregated basis. They actively sought industrial development, northern investment, and internal improvements.

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African Americans served at every level of government during Reconstruction. At the federal level, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were chosen as United States Senators from Mississippi. Fourteen men served in the House of Representatives. At least two hundred seventy other African American men served in patronage positions as postmasters, customs officials, assessors, and ambassadors. At the state level, more than 1,000 African American men held offices in the South. P. B. S. Pinchback served as Louisiana's Governor for thirty-four days after the previous governor was suspended during impeachment proceedings and was the only African American state governor until Virginia elected L. Douglass Wilder in 1989. Almost 800 African American men served as state legislators around the South with African Americans at one time making up a majority in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

The African American office holders during Reconstruction came from diverse backgrounds. Many had been born free or had gained their freedom before the Civil War. Many free African Americans, particularly those in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana, were wealthy and well educated, two facts that distinguished them from much of the white population both before and after the Civil War. Some like Antione Dubuclet of Louisiana and William Breedlove from Virginia owned slaves before the Civil War. Others had helped slaves escape or taught them to read like Georgia's James D. Porter.

The majority of African American office holders, however, were slaves until sometime during the Civil War. Among them were skilled craftsman like Emanuel Fortune, a shoemaker from Florida, ministers such as James D. Lynch from Mississippi, and teachers like William V. Turner from Alabama. Moving into political office was a natural continuation of the leadership roles they had held in their former slave communities.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, more than 2,000 African American men had served in offices ranging from mundane positions such as local Levee Commissioner to United States Senator.<sup>4</sup> When the end of Reconstruction returned white Democrats to power in the South, all but a few African American office holders lost their positions. After Reconstruction African Americans did not enter the political arena again in large numbers until well into the twentieth century.

### III. The Meaning of Black Freedom

Land was one of the major desires of the freed people. Frustrated by responsibility for the growing numbers of freed people following his troops, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15 in which land in Georgia and South Carolina was to be set aside as a homestead for the freedpeople. Sherman lacked the authority to confiscate and distribute land, so this plan never fully took effect. One of the main

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purposes of the Freedmen's Bureau, however, was to redistribute to former slaves lands that had been abandoned and confiscated by the federal government. Even these land grants were short lived. In 1866, land that ex-Confederates had left behind was reinstated to them.

Freedpeople's hopes of land reform were unceremoniously dashed as Freedmen Bureau agents held meetings with the freedmen throughout the South telling them the promise of land was not going to be honored and that instead they should plan to go back to work for their former owners as wage laborers. The policy reversal came as quite a shock. In one instance, Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner General Oliver O. Howard went to Edisto Island to inform the black population there of the policy change. The black commission's response was that "we were promised Homesteads by the government . . . You ask us to forgive the land owners of our island . . . The man who tied me to a tree and gave me 39 lashes and who stripped and flogged my mother and my sister . . . that man I cannot well forgive. Does it look as if he has forgiven me, seeing how he tries to keep me in a condition of helplessness?"

In working to ensure that crops would be harvested, agents sometimes coerced former slaves into signing contracts with their former masters. However, the Bureau also instituted courts where African Americans could seek redress if their employers were abusing them or not paying them. The last ember of

hope for land redistribution was extinguished when Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner's proposed land reform bills were tabled in Congress. Radicalism had its limits, and the Republican Party's commitment to economic stability eclipsed their interest in racial justice.

Another aspect of the pursuit of freedom was the reconstitution of families. Many freedpeople immediately left plantations in search of family members who had been sold away. Newspaper ads sought information about long lost relatives. People placed these ads until the turn of the 20th century, demonstrating the enduring pursuit of family reunification. Freedpeople sought to gain control over their own children or other children who had been apprenticed to white masters either during the war or as a result of the Black Codes. Above all, freedpeople wanted freedom to control their families.

Many freedpeople rushed to solemnize unions with formal wedding ceremonies. Black people's desires to marry fit the government's goal to make free black men responsible for their own households and to prevent black women and children from becoming dependent on the government.

Freedpeople placed a great emphasis on education for their children and themselves. For many, the ability to finally read the Bible for themselves induced work-weary men and women to spend all evening or Sunday attending night school or Sunday school classes. It was not uncommon to find a one-room

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school with more than 50 students ranging in age from 3 to 80. As Booker T. Washington famously described the situation, “it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn.”

Many churches served as schoolhouses and as a result became central to the freedom struggle. Free and freed blacks carried well-formed political and organizational skills into freedom. They developed anti-racist politics and organizational skills through anti-slavery organizations turned church associations. Liberated from white-controlled churches, black Americans remade their religious worlds according to their own social and spiritual desires.

One of the more marked transformations that took place after emancipation was the proliferation of independent black churches and church associations. In the 1930s, nearly 40% of 663 black churches surveyed had their organizational roots in the post-emancipation era. Many independent black churches emerged in the rural areas and most of them had never been affiliated with white churches.

Many of these independent churches were quickly organized into regional, state, and even national associations, often by brigades of northern and midwestern free blacks who went to the South to help the freedmen. Through associations like the Virginia Baptist State Convention and the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, Baptists

became the fastest growing post-emancipation denomination, building on their anti-slavery associational roots and carrying on the struggle for black political participation.

Tensions between Northerners and Southerners over styles of worship and educational requirements strained these associations. Southern, rural black churches preferred worship services with more emphasis on inspired preaching, while northern urban blacks favored more orderly worship and an educated ministry.

Perhaps the most significant internal transformation in churches had to do with the role of women—a situation that eventually would lead to the development of independent women’s conventions in Baptist, Methodist and Pentecostal churches. Women like Nannie Helen Burroughs and Virginia Broughton, leaders of the Baptist Woman’s Convention, worked to protect black women from sexual violence from white men, a concern that black representatives articulated in state constitutional conventions early in the Reconstruction era. In churches, women continued to have to fight for equal treatment and access to the pulpit as preachers, even though they were able to vote in church meetings.

Black churches provided centralized leadership and organization in post-emancipation communities. Many political leaders and officeholders were ministers. Churches were often the largest building



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in town and served as community centers. Access to pulpits and growing congregations, provided a foundation for ministers' political leadership. Groups like the Union League, militias and fraternal organizations all used the regalia, ritual and even hymns of churches to inform and shape their practice.

Black Churches provided space for conflict over gender roles, cultural values, practices, norms, and political engagement. With the rise of Jim Crow, black churches would enter a new phase of negotiating relationships within the community and the wider world.

### IV. Reconstruction and Women

Reconstruction involved more than the meaning of emancipation. Women also sought to redefine their roles within the nation and in their local communities. The abolitionist and women's rights movements simultaneously converged and began to clash. In the South, both black and white women struggled to make sense of a world of death and change. In Reconstruction, leading women's rights advocate Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw an unprecedented opportunity for disenfranchised groups—women as well as African Americans, northern and southern—to seize political rights. Stanton formed the Women's Loyal National League in 1863, which petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment marked a victory not only for the antislavery cause, but also for the Loyal League,

proving women's political efficacy and the possibility for radical change. Now, as Congress debated the meanings of freedom, equality, and citizenship for former slaves, women's rights leaders saw an opening to advance transformations in women's status, too. On the tenth of May 1866, just one year after the war, the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention met in New York City to discuss what many agreed was an extraordinary moment, full of promise for fundamental social change. Elizabeth Cady Stanton presided over the meeting. Also in attendance were prominent abolitionists, with whom Stanton and other women's rights leaders had joined forces in the years leading up to the war. Addressing this crowd of social reformers, Stanton captured the radical spirit of the hour: "now in the reconstruction," she declared, "is the opportunity, perhaps for the century, to base our government on the broad principle of equal rights for all." Stanton chose her universal language—"equal rights *for all*"—with intention, setting an agenda of universal suffrage for the activists. Thus, in 1866, the National Women's Rights Convention officially merged with the American Antislavery Society to form the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). This union marked the culmination of the longstanding partnership between abolitionist and women's rights advocates.

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Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton maintained a strong and productive relationship for nearly half a century as they sought to secure political rights for women. While the fight for women's rights stalled during the war, it sprung back to life as Anthony, Stanton, and others formed the American Equal Rights Association. “[Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seated, and Susan B. Anthony, standing, three-quarter length portrait],” between 1880 and 1902. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500087/>.

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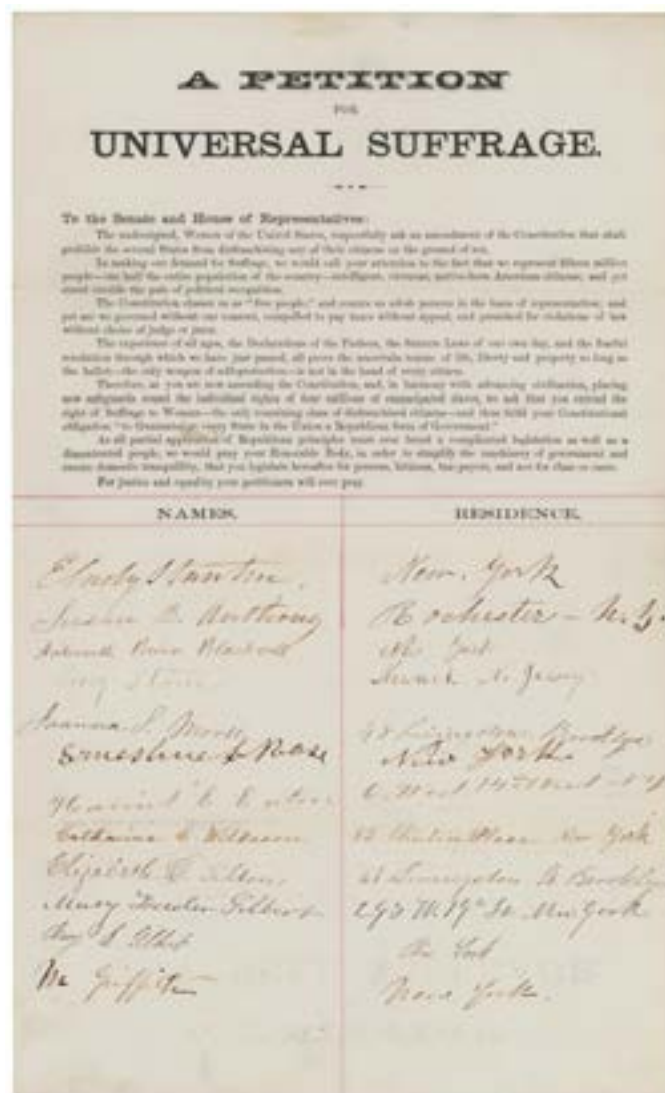
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The AERA was split over whether black (male) suffrage should take precedence over universal suffrage given the political climate of the South. Some worried that political support for freedmen would be undermined by the pursuit of women's suffrage. For example, AERA member Frederick Douglass insisted that the ballot was literally a "question of life and death" for southern black men, but not for women. Some African-American women challenged white suffragists in other ways; Frances Harper, for example, a free-born black woman living in Ohio, urged them to consider their own privilege as white and middle class. Universal suffrage, she argued, would not so clearly address the complex difficulties posed by racial, economic, and gender inequality.

These divisions came to a head early in 1867, as the AERA organized a campaign in Kansas to determine the fate of black and woman suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her partner in the movement, Susan B. Anthony, made the journey to advocate universal suffrage. Yet they soon realized that their allies were distancing themselves from women's suffrage in order to advance black enfranchisement. Disheartened, Stanton and Anthony allied instead with white supremacists that supported women's equality. Many fellow activists were dismayed by Stanton and Anthony's willingness to appeal to racism to advance their cause.

These tensions finally erupted over conflicting



Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great women's rights and abolition activist, was one of the strongest forces in the universal suffrage movement. Her name can be seen at the top of this petition to extend suffrage to all regardless of sex, which was presented to Congress on January 29, 1866. It did not pass, and women would not gain the vote for more than half a decade after Stanton and others signed this petition. "Petition of E. Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Others Asking for an Amendment of the Constitution that Shall Prohibit the Several States from Disfranchising Any of Their Citizens on the Ground of Sex," 1865. National Archives and Records Administration, <http://research.archives.gov/description/306684>.

views of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Women's rights leaders vigorously protested the Fourteenth Amendment. Although it established



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national citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the United States, the amendment also introduced the word “male” into the Constitution for the first time. After the Fifteenth Amendment ignored “sex” as an unlawful barrier to suffrage, an omission that appalled Stanton, the AERA officially dissolved. Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while those suffragists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment, regardless of its limitations, founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).

The NWSA soon rallied around a new strategy: the ‘New Departure’. This new approach interpreted the Constitution as *already* guaranteeing women the right to vote. They argued that by nationalizing citizenship for all persons, and protecting all rights of citizens—including the right to vote—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed women’s suffrage. Broadcasting the New Departure, the NWSA encouraged women to register to vote, which roughly seven hundred did between 1868 and 1872. Susan B. Anthony was one of them and was arrested but then acquitted in trial. In 1875, the Supreme Court addressed this constitutional argument: acknowledging women’s citizenship, but arguing that suffrage was not a right guaranteed to all citizens. This ruling not only defeated the New Departure, but also coincided with the Court’s generally reactionary interpretation of the Reconstruction Amendments, which significantly limited freedmen’s rights. Following this defeat, many suffragists like Stanton



*The Fifteenth Amendment gave male citizens, regardless of race, color, or previous status (i.e. slavery), the right to vote. While the amendment was not all encompassing in that women were not included, it was an extremely significant ruling in establishing the liberties of African American men. This print depicts a huge parade held in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 19, 1870, surrounded by portraits of abolitionists and scenes of African Americans exercising their rights. Thomas Kelly after James C. Beard, “The 15th Amendment. Celebrated May 19th 1870,” 1870. [Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr060.html](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr060.html).*

increasingly replaced the ideal of ‘universal suffrage’ with arguments about the virtue that white women would bring to the polls. These new arguments often hinged on racism and declared the necessity of white women voters to keep black men in check.

Advocates for women’s suffrage were largely confined to the North, but southern women were experiencing social transformations as well. The lines between refined white womanhood and degraded enslaved black femaleness were no longer so clearly defined. Moreover, during the war, southern white women had been called upon to do traditional man’s work—chopping wood and managing businesses. While white southern women decided whether and

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how to return to their prior status, African American women embraced new freedoms and a redefinition of womanhood.

The Civil War showed white women, especially upper-class women, life without their husbands' protection. Many did not like what they saw, especially in an uncertain future with the possibility of racial equality. Formerly wealthy women hoped to maintain their social status by rebuilding the prewar social hierarchy. Through the Ladies Memorial Association and other civic groups, southern women led the efforts to bury and memorialize the dead, praising and bolstering their men's masculinity through nationalist speeches and memorials. The Ladies Memorial Association grew out of the Soldiers' Aid Society and became the precursor and custodian of the Lost Cause narrative, which tried to rewrite the history of the antebellum South and the Confederacy in such a way that deemphasized the brutality of slavery. LMAs and their ceremonies created new holidays where white Southerners could reaffirm their allegiance to the Confederacy and express their opposition to black rights. For instance, some LMAs celebrated on May 10th, the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death. Through these activities, southern women took on a more political role in the South.

Southern black women also sought to redefine their public and private lives. Their efforts to control their labor met the immediate opposition of southern white

women. Gertrude Clanton, a plantation mistress before the war, disliked cooking and washing dishes, so she hired an African American woman to do the washing. A misunderstanding quickly developed. The laundress, nameless in Gertrude's records, performed her job and returned home. Gertrude believed that her money had purchased a day's labor, not just the load of washing, and she became quite frustrated. Meanwhile, this washerwoman and others like her set wages and hours for themselves, and in many cases began to take washing into their own homes in order to avoid the surveillance of white women and the sexual threat posed by white men.

Similar conflicts raged across the South. White Southerners demanded that African American women work in the plantation home and instituted apprenticeship systems to place African American children in unpaid labor positions. African American women combated these attempts by refusing to work at jobs without fair pay or conditions, and by clinging tightly to their children.

Like white LMA members, African American women formed clubs to bury their dead, to celebrate African American masculinity, and to provide aid to their communities. On May 1, 1865, African Americans in Charleston created the precursor to the modern Memorial Day by mourning the Union dead buried hastily on a race track-turned prison. Like their white counterparts, the 300 African American women who participated had been members of the local Patriotic

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Association, which aided freedpeople during the war. African American women continued participating in Federal Decoration Day ceremonies and, later, formed their own club organizations. Racial violence, whether city riots or rural vigilantes, continued to threaten these vulnerable households. Nevertheless, the formation and preservation of the African American households became a paramount goal for African American women.

For all of their differences, white and black Southern women faced a similar challenge during Reconstruction. Southern women celebrated the return of their brothers, husbands, and sons, but couples separated for many years struggled to adjust. To make matters worse, many of these former soldiers returned with physical or mental wounds. For white families, suicide and divorce became more acceptable, while the opposite occurred for black families. Since the entire South suffered from economic devastation, many families were impoverished and sank into debt. Southern women struggled to rebuild stability on unstable ground. All Southern women faced economic devastation, lasting wartime trauma, and enduring racial tensions.

## V. Racial Violence in Reconstruction

Violence shattered the dream of biracial democracy. Still steeped in the violence of slavery, white Southerners could scarcely imagine black free labor.



*The Ku Klux Klan was just one of a number of vigilante groups that arose after the war to terrorize African Americans and Republicans throughout the South. The KKK brought violence into the voting polls, the workplace, and — as seen in this Harper's Weekly print — the homes of black Americans. Frank Bellew, "Visit of the Ku-Klux," 1872. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visit\\_of\\_the\\_Ku-Klux\\_1872.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visit_of_the_Ku-Klux_1872.jpg).*

Congressional investigator, Carl Schurz, reported that in the summer of 1865, Southerners shared a near unanimous sentiment that "You cannot make the negro work, without physical compulsion." Violence had been used in the antebellum period to enforce slave labor and to define racial difference. In the post-emancipation period it was used to stifle black advancement and return to the old order.

Much of life in the antebellum South had been premised on slavery; the social order rested upon a subjugated underclass and the labor system required unfree laborers. A notion of white supremacy and black inferiority undergirded it all: whites were understood as fit for freedom and citizenship; blacks for chattel slave labor. The Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House and the subsequent

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adoption by the U.S. Congress of the Thirteenth Amendment destroyed the institution of American slavery and threw the southern society into disarray. The foundation of southern society had been shaken, but southern whites used black codes and racial terrorism to reassert control of former slaves.

Racial violence in the Reconstruction period took three major forms: riots against black political authority, interpersonal fights, and organized vigilante groups. There were riots in southern cities several times during Reconstruction. The most notable were the riots in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866, but other large-scale urban conflicts erupted in places including Laurens, South Carolina in 1870; Colfax, Louisiana in 1873; another in New Orleans in 1874; Yazoo City, Mississippi in 1875; and Hamburg, South Carolina in 1876. Southern cities grew rapidly after the war as migrants from the countryside—particularly freed slaves—flocked to urban centers. Cities became centers of Republican control. But white conservatives chafed at the influx of black residents and the establishment of biracial politics. In nearly every conflict, white conservatives initiated violence in reaction to Republican rallies or conventions or elections in which black men were to vote. The death tolls of these conflicts remain incalculable—and victims were overwhelmingly black.

Even everyday violence between individuals disproportionately targeted African Americans during



*The national government, initiated by President Lincoln, created the Freedmen's Bureau to assist freed people in securing their rights and their livelihoods. In this Harper's Weekly print, The Freedmen's Bureau official protecting the black men and women from the angry and riotous mob of white Americans stood as a representation of the entire Bureau. Soon the Bureau and the federal government would recognize that they could not accomplish a fraction of what they set out to do, including keeping African Americans safe and free in the South. Alfred R. Waud, "The Freedmen's Bureau," 1868. Library of Congress.*

Reconstruction. Though African Americans gained citizenship rights like the ability to serve on juries as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment to the federal constitution, southern white men were rarely successfully prosecuted for violence against black victims. White men beat or shot black men with relative impunity, and did so over minor squabbles, labor disputes, longstanding grudges, and crimes of passion. These incidents sometimes were reported to local federal authorities like the army or the Freedmen's Bureau, but more often than not such violence was underreported and unprosecuted.

More premeditated was the violence committed by organized vigilante groups, sometimes called nightriders or bushwhackers. Groups of nightriders—



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called so because they often operated at night, under cover of darkness and wearing disguises—sought to curtail African American political involvement by harassing and killing black candidates and office holders and frightening voters away from the polls. They also aimed to limit black economic mobility by terrorizing freedpeople who tried to purchase land or otherwise become too independent from the white masters they used to rely on. They were terrorists and vigilantes, determined to stop the erosion of the antebellum South, and they were widespread and numerous, operating throughout the South. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in the late 1860s as the most infamous of these groups.

The Ku Klux Klan was organized in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee and had spread to nearly every state of the former Confederacy by 1868. The Klan drew heavily from the antebellum southern elite, but Klan groups sometimes overlapped with criminal gangs or former Confederate guerrilla groups. The Klan's reputation became so potent, and its violence so widespread, that many groups not formally associated with it were called Ku Kluxers, and to “Ku Klux” was used to mean to commit vigilante violence. While it is difficult to differentiate Klan actions from those of similar groups, such as the White Line, Knights of the White Camellia, and the White Brotherhood, the distinctions hardly matter. All such groups were part of a web of terror that spread throughout the South during Reconstruction. In Panola County, Mississippi, between August 1870 and December 1872, twenty-four Klan-style murders occurred. And nearby, in

Lafayette County, Klansmen drowned thirty blacks in a single mass murder. Sometimes the violence was aimed at “uppity” blacks who had tried to buy land or dared to be insolent toward a white. Other times, as with the beating of Republican sheriff and tax collector Allen Huggins, the Klan targeted white politicians who supported freedpeople's civil rights. Numerous, perhaps dozens, of Republican politicians were killed, either while in office or while campaigning. Thousands of individual citizens, men and women, white and black, had their homes raided and were whipped, raped, or murdered.

The federal government responded to southern paramilitary tactics by passing the Enforcement Acts between 1870 and 1871. The acts made it criminal to deprive African Americans of their civil rights. The acts also deemed violent Klan behavior as acts of rebellion against the United States and allowed for the use of U.S. troops to protect freedpeople. For a time, the federal government, its courts, and its troops, sought to put an end to the KKK and related groups. But the violence continued. By 1876, as southern Democrats reestablished “home rule” and “redeemed” the South from Republican rule, federal opposition to the KKK weakened. National attention shifted away from the South and the activities of the Klan, but African Americans remained trapped in a world of white supremacy that restricted their economic, social, and political rights.

White conservatives would assert that Republicans, in denouncing violence, were “waving a bloody shirt”

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for political opportunity. The violence, according to many white conservatives, was fabricated, or not as bad as it was claimed, or an unavoidable consequence of the enfranchisement of African Americans. On December 22, 1871, R. Latham of Yorkville, South Carolina wrote to the *New York Tribune*, voicing the beliefs of many white Southerners as he declared that “the same principle that prompted the white men at Boston, disguised as Indians, to board, during the darkness of night, a vessel with tea, and throw her cargo into the Bay, clothed some of our people in Ku Klux gowns, and sent them out on missions technically illegal. Did the Ku Klux do wrong? You are ready to say they did and we will not argue the point with you... Under the peculiar circumstances what could the people of South Carolina do but resort to Ku Kluxing?”

Victims and witnesses to the violence told a different story. Sallie Adkins of Warren County, Georgia, was traveling with her husband, Joseph, a Georgia state senator, when he was assassinated by Klansmen on May 10, 1869. She wrote President Ulysses S. Grant, asking for both physical protection and justice. “I am no Statesman,” she disclaimed, “I am only a poor woman whose husband has been murdered for his devotion to his country. I may have very foolish ideas of Government, States & Constitutions. But I feel that I have claims upon my country. The Rebels imprisoned my Husband. Pardoned Rebels murdered him. There is no law for the punishment of them who do deeds of this sort... I demand that you, President



George N. Barnard, “City of Atlanta, Ga., no. 1,” c. 1866. *Library of Congress*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008679857/>.

Grant, keep the pledge you made the nation—make it safe for any man to utter boldly and openly his devotion to the United States.”

The political and social consequences of the violence were as lasting as the physical and mental trauma suffered by victims and witnesses. Terrorism worked to end federal involvement in Reconstruction and helped to usher in a new era of racial repression.

African Americans actively sought ways to shed the vestiges of slavery. Many discarded the names their former masters had chosen for them and adopted new names like “Freeman” and “Lincoln” that affirmed their new identities as free citizens. Others resettled far from the plantations they had labored on as slaves, hoping to eventually farm their own land or run their own businesses. By the end of Reconstruction, the desire for self-definition, economic independence, and racial pride coalesced in the founding of dozens

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of black towns across the South. Perhaps the most well-known of these towns was Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a Delta town established in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery and Ben Green, former slaves of Joseph and Jefferson Davis. Residents of the town took pride in the fact that African Americans owned all of the property in town, including banks, insurance companies, shops, and the surrounding farms, and they celebrated African American cultural and economic achievements during their annual festival, Mound Bayou Days. These tight-knit communities provided African Americans with spaces where they could live free from the indignities segregation and the exploitation of sharecropping on white-owned plantations.

## VI. Economic Development During the Civil War and Reconstruction

The Civil War destroyed and transformed the American economy. In 1859 and 1860, southern planters were flush with prosperity after producing record cotton crops—America’s most valuable export at the time. Southern prosperity relied on over 4 million African American slaves to grow cotton, along with a number of other staple crops across the region. Cotton fed the textile mills of America and Europe and brought great wealth to the region. On the eve of war, the American South enjoyed more per capita wealth than any other slave economy in the New World. To their masters, slaves constituted their most valuable



*War brought destruction across the South. Governmental and private buildings, communication systems, the economy, and transportation infrastructure were all debilitated. “[Richmond, Va. Crippled locomotive, Richmond & Petersburg Railroad depot],” c. 1865. [Library of Congress](#).*

assets, worth roughly three billion dollars. Yet this wealth obscured the gains in infrastructure, industrial production, and financial markets occurring north of the Mason-Dixon line, a fact that the war would unmask for all to see.

In contrast to the slave South, Northerners praised their region as a land of free labor, populated by farmers, merchants, and wage-laborers. It was also home to a robust market economy. By 1860, northerners could buy clothing made in a New England factory, or light their homes with kerosene oil from Pennsylvania. The Midwest produced seas of grain that fed the country, with enough left over for export to Europe. Farther west, mining and agriculture were the mainstays of life. Along with the textile mills, shoe factories and iron foundries, firms like the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, or the Colt Company displayed the technical advances of northern manufacturers. These goods crisscrossed the country on the North’s growing railroad network.

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Underlying production was an extensive network of banks and financial markets that helped aggregate capital that could be reinvested into further growth.

The Civil War, like all wars, interrupted the rhythms of commercial life by destroying lives and property. This was especially true in the Confederacy. From 1861 onwards, the Confederate government struggled to find the guns, food, and supplies needed to field an army. Southerners did make astonishing gains in industrial production during this time, but it was never enough. The Union's blockade of the Atlantic prevented the Confederacy from financing the war with cotton sales to Europe. To pay their troops and keep the economy alive, the Confederate Congress turned to printing paper money—which quickly sank in value and led to rapid inflation. In many cases, Confederate officials dispensed with taxes paid in cash and simply impressed the food and materials needed from their citizens. Perhaps most striking of all, in the vast agricultural wealth of the South, many Southerners struggled to find enough to eat.

The war also pushed the US government to take unprecedented steps. Congress raised tariffs, and passed the first national income tax in 1862. After the suspension of specie payments in late 1861, Congress created the US's first fiat currency called "greenbacks." At first, the expansion of the currency and the rapid rise in government spending translated into an uptick in business in 1862-1863. As the war dragged on, inflation also hit the North. Workers



*Massachusetts Agricultural College (now known as University of Massachusetts Amherst) was one of many colleges founded through the Federal Morrill-Land Grant Colleges Act. "Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass. 1879," 1880. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mass\\_Aggie.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mass_Aggie.jpg).*

demanded higher wages to pay rents and buy necessities, while the business community groaned under their growing tax burden. The United States, however, never embarked on a policy of impressment for food and supplies. The factories and farms of the North successfully supplied Union troops, while the federal government, with some adjustments, found the means to pay for war. None of this is to suggest that the North's superior ability to supply its war machine made the outcome of the war inevitable. Any account of how the war progressed must take account of the tangled web of politics, battles, and economics that occurred between 1861 and 1865. The aftermath of the war left portions of the Confederacy in ruins, and with little or no money to rebuild. State governments were mired in debt, and white planters, who had most of their capital tied up in slaves, lost most of their wealth. Cotton remained the most significant crop, but the war changed how it was grown and sold. Planters broke up large farms into smaller plots tended to



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by single families in exchange for a portion of the crop, called sharecropping. Once cotton production resumed, Americans found that their cotton now competed with new cotton plantations around the world. For the South as a whole, the war and Reconstruction marked the start of a period of deep poverty that would last until at least the New Deal of the 1930s.

Emancipation was the single most important economic, social and political outcome of the war. Freedom empowered African Americans in the South to rebuild families, make contracts, hold property and move freely for the first time. Republican's in the South attempted to transform the region into a free-labor economy like the North. Yet the transition from slave labor to free labor was never so clear. Well into the 20th century, white Southerners used a combination of legal force and extra-legal violence to maintain systems of bound labor. Vagrancy laws enabled law enforcement to justify arrest of innocent black men and women, and the convict-lease system meant that even an arbitrary arrest could result in decades of forced, uncompensated labor. This new form of slavery continued until World War II.

Re-enslavement was only the most extreme variety in an array of economic injustice. In the later nineteenth-century, poor whites would form mobs and go “white-capping” to scare away blacks from jobs. ((William Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*:

*Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 23.) Lacking the means to buy their own farms, black farmers often turned to sharecropping. Sharecropping often led to cycles of debt that kept families bound to the land.

Victory did not translate into a quick economic boom for the United States. The North would not regain its prewar pace of industrial and commodity output until the 1870s. The war did prove beneficial to northern farmers, who responded to wartime labor shortages with greater use of mechanical reapers, which boosted yields.

Wartime laws also transformed the relationship between the federal government and the American economy. New tariff laws sheltered northern industry from European competition. The Morrill Land Grant helped create colleges such as the University of California, Illinois, and Wisconsin. With the creation of the National Banking System and the greenbacks, Congress replaced hundreds of state bank notes with a system of federal currency that accelerated trade and exchange between regions of the country. This was not to say that Republican policy worked perfectly. The Homestead Act, meant to open the West to small farmers was often frustrated by the actions of Railroad corporations and speculators. The Transcontinental Railroad, also created during the war, failed to produce any economic gains until decades after its creation.

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The war years forged a close relationship between government and the business elite, a relationship that sometimes resulted in corruption and catastrophe, as it did when markets crashed on Black Friday September 24, 1869. This new relationship created a political backlash, especially in the West and South against Washington's perceived eastern and industrial bias. Conflicts over emancipation and civil rights quickly gave way to long political conflict over the direction of American economic development.

## VII. The End of Reconstruction

Reconstruction concluded when national attention turned away from the integration of former slaves as equal citizens enabling white Democrats to recapture southern politics. Between 1868 and 1877, and accelerating after the Depression of 1873, national interest in Reconstruction dwindled as economic issues moved to the foreground. The biggest threat to Republican power in the South was violence and intimidation by white conservatives, staved off by the presence of federal troops in key southern cities. But the United States never committed the manpower required to restore order, if such a task was even possible. Reconstruction finally ended with the contested Presidential election of 1876, which put Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in office in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. But by 1876, the vast majority of federal troops had already left.



*During the Panic of 1873, workers began demanding that the federal government help alleviate the strain on Americans. In January 1874, over 7,000 protesters congregated in New York City's Tompkins Square to insist the government make job creation a priority. They were met with brutality as police dispersed the crowd, and consequently the unemployment movement lost much of its steam. Matt Morgen, Print of a crowd driven from Tompkins Square by the mounted police, in the Tompkins Square Riot of 1874, January 1874. [Wikimedia](#).*

Republicans and Democrats responded to the economic declines by shifting attention from Reconstruction to economic recovery. War weary from nearly a decade of bloody military and political strife, so-called Stalwart Republicans turned from idealism, focusing their efforts on economics and party politics. They grew to particular influence during Ulysses S. Grant's first term (1868-1872). After the death of Thaddeus Stevens in 1868 and the political alienation of Charles Sumner by 1870, Stalwart Republicans assumed primacy in Republican Party politics, putting Reconstruction on the defensive within the very party leading it.

Meanwhile, New Departure Democrats gained strength by distancing themselves from pro-slavery Democrats and Copperheads. They focused on

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| Military District | State          | Readmission | Conservative Takeover |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| District 1        | Virginia       | 1870        | 1870                  |
| District 2        | North Carolina | 1868        | 1870                  |
|                   | South Carolina | 1868        | 1877                  |
| District 3        | Alabama        | 1868        | 1874                  |
|                   | Florida        | 1868        | 1877                  |
|                   | Georgia        | 1870        | 1871                  |
| District 4        | Arkansas       | 1868        | 1874                  |
|                   | Mississippi    | 1870        | 1876                  |
| District 5        | Texas          | 1870        | 1873                  |
|                   | Louisiana      | 1868        | 1877                  |
| None              | Tennessee      | 1866        | 1869                  |

*Table. This table shows the military districts of the seceded states of the South, the date the state was readmitted into the Union, and the date when conservatives recaptured the state house.*

business, economics, political corruption, and trade, instead of Reconstruction. In the South, New Departure Democrats were called Redeemers, and were initially opposed by Southerners who clung tightly to white supremacy and the Confederacy. But between 1869 and 1871, their home rule platform, asserting that good government was run by locals—meaning white Democrats, rather than black or white Republicans—helped end Reconstruction in three important states: Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia.

In September 1873, Jay Cooke and Company declared bankruptcy, resulting in a bank run that spiraled into a six-year depression. The Depression of 1873 destroyed the nation's fledgling labor movement, and helped quell northerners remaining idealism about Reconstruction. In the South, many farms were capitalized entirely through loans. After 1873, most sources of credit vanished, forcing many landowners to default, driving them into an over-saturated labor market. Wages plummeted, contributing to the growing system of debt peonage in the South that

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trapped workers in endless cycles of poverty. The economic turmoil enabled the Democrats to take control of the House of Representatives after the 1874 elections.

On the eve of the 1876 Presidential election, the nation still reeling from depression, the Grant administration found itself no longer able to intervene in the South due to growing national hostility to interference in southern affairs. Scandalous corruption in the Grant Administration had sapped the national trust. By 1875, Democrats in Mississippi hatched the Mississippi Plan, a wave of violence designed to suppress black voters. The state's Republican governor urged federal involvement, but national Republicans ignored the plea. Meanwhile, the Republican candidate for governor of Ohio, Rutherford B. Hayes, won big without mentioning Reconstruction, focusing instead on avoiding corruption, recovering the economy, and discouraging alcohol use. His success entered him into the running as a potential Presidential candidate. The stage was set for an election that would end Reconstruction as a national issue.

Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes as their nominee while Democrats chose Samuel J. Tilden, who ran on honest politics and home rule in the South. Allegations of voter fraud and intimidation emerged in the three states in which Reconstruction held strong and whose outcome would decide the result: Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Indeed, those elections were fraught with violence

and fraud because of the impunity with which white conservatives felt they could operate in their efforts to deter Republican voters. A special electoral commission voted along party lines—eight Republicans for, seven Democrats against—in favor of Hayes.

Democrats threatened to boycott Hayes' inauguration. Rival governments arose claiming to recognize Tilden as the rightfully elected President. Republicans, fearing another sectional crisis, reached out to Democrats. In the Compromise of 1877 Democrats conceded the presidency to Hayes on the promise that all remaining troops would be removed from the South. In March 1877, Hayes was inaugurated; in April, the remaining troops were ordered out of the South. The Compromise allowed southern Democrats to return to power, no longer fearing reprisal from federal troops or northern politicians for their flagrant violence and intimidation of black voters.

After 1877, Republicans no longer had the political capital to intervene in the South in cases of violence and electoral fraud, resulting in fewer chances for freedpeople to hold state office. In certain locations with large populations of African Americans like South Carolina, freedpeople continued to hold some local offices for several years. Yet, with its most revolutionary aims thwarted by 1868, and economic depression and political turmoil taking even its most modest promises off the table by the early 1870s, most of the promises of Reconstruction were unmet.

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### VIII. Conclusion

Reconstruction in the United States achieved Abraham Lincoln's paramount concern: the restoration of the Union. The war and its aftermath forever ended legal slavery in the United States, but African Americans remained second-class citizens and women still struggled for full participation in the public life of the United States. The closing of Reconstruction saw North and South reunited behind the imperatives economic growth and territorial expansion, if not the full rights of its citizens. From the ashes of civil war, a new nation was born, a nation rich with fresh possibilities but beset by old problems.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# TIMELINE

## A Timeline of Reconstruction: 1865-1877

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1865        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>December - Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery.</li> <li>March - Congress established <b>Freedmen's Bureau</b>.</li> <li>April 9 – Civil War Ends.</li> <li>April 15- Assassination of <b>President Abraham Lincoln</b>; <b>Andrew Johnson</b> becomes president.</li> <li><b>Ku Klux Klan</b> created in Tennessee.</li> </ul>   |
| 1866        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Civil Rights Act</b> passed over president's veto.</li> <li>May - <b>Memphis race riot</b>/Massacre.</li> <li>Freedmen's Bureau expanded by Congress. Vetoed by Johnson; Congress overrides veto.</li> <li><b>New Orleans Race Riot</b>/Massacre (July 30).</li> <li>Second Reconstruction Act passed.</li> <li>Third Reconstruction Act passed.</li> <li>Republican party platform calls for African-American equality.</li> </ul> |
| 1868        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fourth Reconstruction Act passed.</li> <li><b>Fourteenth Amendment</b> ratified.</li> <li>Radical Republican, <b>Thaddeus Stevens</b>, dies.</li> <li>Blacks participate in the Republican Party convention that nominated Ulysses S. Grant for president.</li> </ul>  |
| 1869        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ulysses S. Grant</b> becomes president.</li> </ul>  |
| 1870        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hiram Revels</b> elected to U. S. Senate as the first black senator.</li> <li><b>Jasper J. Wright</b> elected to South Carolina Supreme court.</li> <li><b>Fifteenth Amendment</b> ratified.</li> <li>December - <b>Joseph H. Rainey</b>, first black member House.</li> </ul>  |
| 1870 - 1871 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forty-first Congress has two black members in the House.</li> </ul>  |
| 1871        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forty-second Congress has five black members in the House of Representatives.</li> <li><b>Ku Klux Klan</b> Act passed.</li> </ul>  |
| 1872        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Freedmen's Bureau</u> abolished.</li> </ul>   |

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|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1872 - 1873 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>P. B. S. Pinchback</b> first black state governor of South Carolina.</li> </ul>   |
| 1874        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Blanche K. Bruce</b> elected to U. S. Senate.</li> <li>• <b>Robert Smalls</b>, black hero of the Civil War, elected to Congress as representative of South Carolina.</li> </ul>   |
| 1873 - 1875 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forty-third Congress has six black members in the House.</li> </ul>  |
| 1875 - 1877 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forty-fourth Congress continued black membership in the House.</li> </ul>  |
| 1875        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• March - <b>Civil Rights Act</b> enacted by Congress for equal treatment in public places and transportation, but the Supreme Court later declared it unconstitutional.</li> <li>• <b>Blanche Kelso</b> elected as Senator from Mississippi.</li> </ul> |
| 1876        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U. S. Senate votes not to seat P. B. S. Pinchback.</li> <li>• Ex-Confederate, Wade Hampton, becomes governor of South Carolina.</li> </ul>   |
| 1877        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rutherford B. Hayes</b> inaugurated President of the United States.</li> </ul>  |
| 1877 - 1879 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forty-fifth Congress has four black members in House.</li> <li>• Last federal troops leave South Carolina effectively ending the Federal government's presence in the South.</li> </ul>  |



# UNIT 2

## THE WEST

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### The West in Theme Analysis

The white expansion westward was a process of warfare, assimilation, devastation, and exploitation. It also opened up the continent and connected the industrialized East to the vast supply of mineral, natural, and agricultural resources of the West, which were so critical to the industrial development of the nation. The history of the West also is a reminder of the failures of prior generations to acknowledge and respect other human culture, animal species, and the land. It also is the story of the nation's growth toward becoming a major industrial power, capable of potentially feeding its people three times over while also exporting food stuffs and raw materials to other nations. This fact positioned the U.S. to become a leading world power in the early 20th century. The interconnectedness of the West and industrial East (which blossomed during this era) was a critical component in the development of the U.S. as a progressive world power. As you read the chapter for this unit, think about how the history of the West has impacted life today.

### The West in American Thought

By the 1890s, white Americans viewed the western frontier as a line between “civilization and savagery.” However by that time, as historian Frederick Jackson Turner said in his “Frontier Thesis,” the frontier finally had closed. He argued that the American contact with this frontier was what made Americans who they

were: strong, acute, inquisitive, practical, restless, independent, individualistic, and energetic. With the closing of the frontier, white Americans idealized the history and culture of the West in popular culture. The West became a Utopian ideal that appealed to those who wanted to improve their socio-economic standing within society. The belief that the common person could succeed in the West became part of the “American dream.” Folks moved westward because of the vast amount of land waiting to be developed. Popular media culture encouraged this through the publication of Dime Novels (inexpensive books) that presented the image of the mythic western man or woman as a hero, braving all odds, fighting for good in order to defeat evil, and succeeding to find everlasting happiness. Famous persons of the West such as Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, and William Cody (Buffalo Bill) were popularized through biographies. Wilderness Novels about life on the western frontier were predominant, and many included women-centered novels about frontier heroines (O' Pioneers), and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show capitalized on these images, bringing them to life for audiences in the East, in the 1880s. At this time, many citizens and politicians became concerned about preserving the beauty, and thus the legend of the West, through conservation efforts. The popular images of the West became an important part of 20th century popular culture, for instance in the 1920s the cowboy myth evolved into the stereotypical John Wayne image of the brave, lone-rider who stamped out evil like a knight in shining armor. Later, in the 1950s at the height of Cold War era para-

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noia in the nation, the cowboy reemerged as a symbolic figure of the battle between good versus evil

### The Mythology of the West

Images of the West ignore the treatment of the Native Americans, stereotyping them, as well as ignoring the host of other minorities in the west like the African-, Asian-, and Mexican-Americans. The ethnic and racial composition of the West always differed from the rest of the nation. In 1900 the western half of the U.S. included 15% of all white Americans, 10% of all African-Americans, 81% of all Asian-Americans, 82% of all American-Indians, and 98% of all Mexican-Americans. And, between 1854 & 1882 approximately 300,000 Chinese came to the United States from southern China where political and economic problems had resulted in famine. The California “Gold Rush” attracted many to the “Land of the Golden Mountain.” The Chinese were a third of all miners in California in 1860 and half of all miners by 1870. The majority of railroad workers (builders) for the Central Pacific Railroad were Chinese. Also, many were farmers and agricultural laborers, working with fruit crops. In the cities like San Francisco, “Chinatowns” developed in order for the Chinese community to survive. The Chinese were rejected by native whites and other groups throughout the West, and violence and rioting against Asians occurred. Discrimination also was high; for example they were denied access to educational opportunities. By the 1880s, Chinese-Americans organized into groups to legally fight discrimination, with some minor success

### Environmental Changes and Conservation

The settlement of the West: destroyed the Buffalo and other animal populations; changed the use of the land and geography via farms, railroads, and new towns; altered the ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest through mining and lumbering; and, depleted the regions mineral resources through mining. CONSERVATIONISM started in the late 19th century, with the legend of the West sparking an interest in the preservation of western lands. The natural beauty of the region was magnificent, and authors published books describing the beauty and natural phenomenon located in the area. Certain individuals spearheaded efforts to preserve the West. Henry Washburn (1870) led an expedition to the hot springs/geysers in the Yellowstone River in northwestern Wyoming and eastern Montana, with the original intent on developing the area for railroads. Instead, people petitioned Congress to create Yellowstone National Park (1872). John Muir became a leading advocate of wilderness protection during the era and contributed to the formation of Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Club.

### The Frontiers

The Native American West and the assimilation and suppression of the United States’ First Peoples by the Federal government is well covered in your textbook readings, along with the importance of the railroads

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in that process. It also is important to break down the various settlement frontiers of the West. These were: farming, timber, mining, cattle, and the Southwest.

### Farming

Farmers were often known as “sodbusters.” All frontiers were arduous for settlers, but though land was cheap via the various Homestead Acts of 1860s and again in the 1890s, it was very difficult for families to get established. The tools, horses, seeds, wagons, etc... needed to live on and work the land were costly, and farmers found themselves in debt quickly. Additionally, the environment was awful. Surface water was scarce, and deep wells had to be dug with limited resources to do so. Windmills had to be built, as well. Violent weather patterns of the Plains, in particular, were costly and deadly: tornadoes, hailstorms, blizzards, droughts, prairie fires, hordes of grasshoppers, and high winds. New farming methods and machines due to advancing post-Civil War technologies helped, but most were not readily accessible to the average farmer, and thus agribusiness developed during this time, with corporations buying up smaller farms (employing some of those farmers as laborers) and mechanizing, large-scale agricultural production. The average farmer, though, still was present, and many of the farming families of the era also suffered under the abuses of banks and railroads. Due to lack of regulations, banks recalled mortgages, meaning farmers who immediately could not pay off their debts went bankrupt and lost everything. Railroads, in particular, abused the liberties of farmers by charging exorbitant

rates to ship goods within and out of states; these rates meant that farmers were unable to make a profit. Initially formed in the 1860s as a social and educational group for farmers, the Grange quickly became a political voice for farmers within their states against corporate abuses of individual liberties. By 1867, eleven states in the Union had Granger Parties fighting for the rights of farmers. The efforts of these and other grassroots political organizations led to the passage of laws within various states, capping the maximum rates that railroads could charge for shipping. But, due to the increasing interconnectivity between East and West, intrastate legislation was not enough, and in time other political organizations, representing the voice of the farmer and worker, pressured for national-level regulation of interstate trade.

### Timber

The timber frontiers during this time were the Pacific Northwest and the Upper Midwest. These regions were of a different climate, particularly the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, and Northern California) due to their heavier rainfalls. Timber companies bought up large amounts of land for the purpose of harvesting as much timber as possible for national distribution. The most famous of these timber towns was Seattle, which grew from a sleepy frontier village into a major lumber town, supplying the growing cities of the country, such as San Francisco. However, towns in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, like Nahma, also were critically important in the harvesting of timber, much of which was used throughout the cities

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of the Midwest, including Chicago after the Great Fire in 1871. At the federal level, the Timber Culture Act of 1873, functioned much like the Homestead Acts, in that, it distributed land to settlers willing to cultivate trees on 40 acres. Many did not though and used the land for other agricultural purposes. The railroads were attracted to lumber producing areas. In the Upper Peninsula, some of the first rail lines were developed for the shipment of timber. With the demand for timber from these regions and others, production boomed, and the ecology of the nation changed dramatically, particularly in the Pacific Northwest.

### Mining

The mining frontier has been treated with a lot of mythology. Seen as the epitome of the Wild West, life in these towns was to a degree “wild” in the early stages of settlement. The first boom in mining happened in the far West, becoming also the first area to be extensively settled around the mining economy and in areas most unsuitable for farming. Settlers moved to the area hoping to strike it rich, but the boom period lasted only from 1860-1890. Individual prospectors were quickly replaced by corporations that hired individual-contract miners. The types of mining included: panning, digging (or strip mining), shaft, crushing, and hydraulic. The latter type resulted in the passage of the Caminetti Act of 1893, in which the federal government allowed states to regulate the use of high-pressure water (blasting away at the earth’s surface to uncover minerals) mining. This type of

mining was environmentally devastating, with consequences lasting to today, but the main reason it was opposed during the time was due to run-off blocking downstream access to water, e.g. for irrigation. Mining also attracted a diversity of laborers including people of: Mexican, Native American, Chinese, and African descent. At the highest of pay, some miners earned around \$2,000/year, but the cost of living was high with meals and board costing between \$480 and \$720/year. Additionally, like most Americans of the era, miners were not savers, and they spent much of their pay on expensive food and dress, and sometimes prostitution. To get an idea of how much a miner might have earned on average compared to other workers, teachers earned between \$450-650/year, and domestic workers earned between \$250-350/year.

### Cattle

This frontier also was the stuff movies were made of, thus masking the realities to the general public. Meat was needed to feed the growing industrial-working population of the East and other major cities. Cattle roamed openly on the ranges of Texas, but were driven to railroad hubs to be shipped northward to slaughter houses, such as those found in Chicago. Between 1866-1880, over four million heads of cattle were driven from Texas (this was at the same time the government was mass-extermimating the number one food supply of the Native Americans: the buffalo, letting carcasses rot on the plains). Along the cattle routes grew what were called “cattle towns,” such as Abilene, Wichita, and Dodge City. These towns also

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had an element of the “Wild West” in them at first, but quickly they became part of mainstream America, with schools, churches, police forces, and thriving downtown businesses and amenities such as electrical power. Lawlessness was not as characteristic of the West as people today think. Law and order was demanded by the citizens of established communities, including laws that regulated saloons, prostitution, gambling, and the carrying of guns. The boom period in cattle ranching was between 1866-1886, when investors sunk a lot of money into the industry and thus drove prices down. But, between 1886-1887 a severe winter led to the death of many herds, and bankruptcy resulted throughout the industry. The ranches that survived continued to meet the high demand for meat in the US, particularly some of the larger, wealthier ones. The “King Ranch” in Texas was one-million acres (about the size of Rhode Island). Additionally, the cattle industry left the nation with a new technology that reshaped the frontier and has been continually used to this day. In 1873, Joseph Glidden invented barbed wire for fencing in herds. Lastly, the cowboy remains part of American mythology. The image that we think of today was created during the cattle boom in the 1870s and became most popular during the 1950s through movies and television. However, the cowboys of the past were not the “good versus evil,” heroes that movies and television portrayed. Many were violent, cruel, and lawless men, and their life was not glamorous but rather filled with very demanding and lonely work, along with many dangers such as: stampedes and lack of shelter from the elements.

### Southwest

One of the least thought of or understood frontiers was that of the Southwest. Originally part of Mexico and acquired via the Mexican-American War in 1848, this part of the United States immediately housed a diverse population. Mexican-Americans, though, were treated as second-class citizens culturally and legally by the whites that settled the region. Proud and successful Mexican (*Californios*) families who were land wealthy found their ownership of their lands challenged in court by Anglos, with many *Californios* being stripped of their lands and losing their local political influence, status, and power. Poor Mexican-Americans who lived in *barrios* and Chinese immigrants, who settled in mining communities and in cities like San Francisco, faced racism and discrimination. Though Chinese-Americans found organizing more difficult, the many Hispanic-Americans allied in order to socially and legally challenge the treatment of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. Not everyone was satisfied with peaceable action. For example, Juan Cortina maintained an army that conducted raids in the 1850s in Texas from Mexico in an attempt to challenge to Anglo land claims. Many Mexican-Americans though worked to preserve their culture via extended family network and through the establishment of cooperatives which networked regionally. Another major part of the history of the Southwest was the Mormon settlement in Salt Lake City, Utah. Arriving after a migration from out East in 1847, the community lived for only a brief period outside of the United States. After the

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Mexican-American War acquired Utah for the US, the theocratic and polygamous Mormons were under US law which prohibited both. Skilled at farming sugar via irrigation techniques learned from the regions natives, the Mormon community was successful economically. Legally, the federal government sought to end the practice of polygamy, though, via the Edmunds Anti-Polygamy Act and the Edmunds-Tucker Act, both of 1882, which combined made polygamy a felony, set related punishments, ended the practitioner's right to vote, serve on a jury, and run for office, and confiscated church property. Pressure from the US government to give up polygamy as a condition for Utah becoming a state led to a change of heart among church leaders who ended the practice. Utah became a state in 1896.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*



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## CONQUERING THE WEST

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Edward S. Curtis, *Navajo Riders in Canyon de Chelly*, c1904, via [Library of Congress](#).

## I. Introduction

Deep into the nineteenth century, Native Americans still dominated the vastness of the American West. Linked culturally and geographically by trade, travel, and warfare, various indigenous groups controlled most of the continent west of the Mississippi River. Spanish, French, British, and later American traders had integrated themselves into many regional economies, and American emigrants pushed ever westward, but no imperial power had yet achieved anything approximating political or military control over the great bulk of the continent. But then the Civil War came and went and decoupled the West from the question of slavery just as the United States industrialized and laid down rails and pushed its ever-expanding population ever-farther west.

Indigenous Americans had lived in North America for over ten millennia and, into the late-nineteenth century, perhaps as many as 250,000 natives still inhabited the American West. But then unending waves of American settlers, the American military, and the unstoppable onrush of American capital conquered all. The United States removed native groups to ever-shrinking reservations, incorporated the West first as territories and then as states, and, for the first time in its history, controlled the enormity of land between the two oceans.

The history of the late-nineteenth-century West is many-sided. Tragedy for some, triumph for others, the many intertwined histories of the American West marked a pivotal transformation in the history of the United States.



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### II. Post-Civil War Westward Migration

In the decades after the Civil War, Americans poured across the Mississippi River in record numbers. No longer simply crossing over the continent for new imagined Edens in California or Oregon, they settled now in the vast heart of the continent.

Many of the first American migrants had come to the West in search of quick profits during the mid-century gold and silver rushes. As in the California rush of 1848–49, droves of prospectors poured in after precious-metal strikes in Colorado in 1858, Nevada in 1859, Idaho in 1860, Montana in 1863, and the Black Hills in 1874. While women often performed housework that allowed mining families to subsist in often difficult conditions, a significant portion of the mining workforce were single men without families dependent on service industries in nearby towns and cities. There, working-class women worked in shops, saloons, boarding houses, and brothels. It was often these ancillary operations that profited from the mining boom: as failed prospectors often found, the rush itself often generated more wealth than the mines. The gold that left Colorado in the first seven years after the Pike's Peak gold strike—estimated at \$25.5 million—was, for instance, less than half of what outside parties had invested in the fever. The 100,000-plus migrants who settled in the Rocky Mountains were ultimately more valuable to the region's development than the gold they came to find.



*While bison supplied leather for America's booming clothing industry, the skulls of the animals also provided a key ingredient in fertilizer. This 1870s photograph illustrates the massive number of bison killed for these and other reasons (including sport) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Photograph of a pile of American bison skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer, 1870s. [Wikimedia](#).*

Others came to the Plains to extract the hides of the great bison herds. Millions of animals had roamed the Plains, but their tough leather supplied industrial belting in eastern factories and raw material for the booming clothing industry. Specialized teams took down and skinned the herds. The infamous American bison slaughter peaked in the early 1870s. The number of American bison plummeted from over 10 million at mid-century to only a few hundred by the early 1880s. The expansion of the railroads would allow ranching to replace the bison with cattle on the American grasslands.

The nearly 70,000 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (more commonly called Mormons) who migrated west between 1846 and

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1868 were similar to other Americans traveling west on the overland trails. They faced many of the same problems, but unlike most other American migrants, Mormons were fleeing from religious persecution.

Many historians view Mormonism as a “uniquely American faith,” not just because it was founded by Joseph Smith in New York in the 1830s, but because of its optimistic and future-oriented tenets. Mormons believed that Americans were exceptional—chosen by God to spread truth across the world and to build utopia, a New Jerusalem in North America. However, many Americans were suspicious of the Latter-Day Saint movement and its unusual rituals, especially the practice of polygamy, and most Mormons found it difficult to practice their faith in the eastern United States. Thus began a series of migrations in the mid-nineteenth century, first to Illinois, then Missouri and Nebraska, and finally into Utah Territory.

Once in the west, Mormon settlements served as important supply points for other emigrants heading on to California and Oregon. Brigham Young, the leader of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith, was appointed governor of the Utah Territory by the federal government in 1850. He encouraged Mormon residents of the territory to engage in agricultural pursuits and be cautious of the outsiders who arrived as the mining and railroad industries developed in the region.



*This 1872 land advertisement for Iowa and Nebraska underscores what was the most important driving force for western migrants: land. “Millions of acres. Iowa and Nebraska. Land for sale on 10 years credit by the Burlington & Missouri River R. R. Co. at 6 per ct interest and low prices...,” 1872. [Library of Congress](#).*

It was land, ultimately, that drew the most migrants to the West. Family farms were the backbone of the agricultural economy that expanded in the West after the Civil War. In 1862, northerners in Congress passed the Homestead Act, allowed male citizens (or those who declared their intent to become citizens) to claim federally-owned lands in the West. Settlers could head west, choose a 160 acre surveyed section of land, file a claim,

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and begin “improving” the land by plowing fields, building houses and barns, or digging wells, and, after five years of living on the land, could apply for the official title deed to the land. Hundreds of thousands of Americans used the Homestead Act to acquire land. The treeless plains that had been considered unfit for settlement became the new agricultural mecca for land-hungry Americans.

The Homestead Act excluded married women from filing claims because they were considered the legal dependents of their husbands. Some unmarried women filed claims on their own, but single farmers (male or female) were hard-pressed to run a farm and they were a small minority. Most farm households adopted traditional divisions of labor: men worked in the fields and women managed the home and kept the family fed. Both were essential.

Migrants sometimes found in homesteads a self-sufficiency denied at home. Second or third sons who did not inherit land in Scandinavia, for instance, founded farm communities in Minnesota, Dakota, and other Midwestern territories in the 1860s. Boosters encouraged emigration by advertising the semiarid Plains as, for instance, “a flowery meadow of great fertility clothed in nutritious grasses, and watered by numerous streams.” Western populations exploded. The Plains were transformed. In 1860, for example, Kansas had about 10,000 farms; in 1880 it had 239,000. Texas, for instance, saw enormous population growth. The federal government counted 200,000 persons in



*Buffalo Soldiers, the nickname given to African-American cavalrymen by the native Americans they fought, were the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular United States army. These soldiers regularly confronted racial prejudice from other Army members and civilians, but were an essential part of American victories during the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “[Buffalo soldiers of the 25th Infantry, some wearing buffalo robes, Ft. Keogh, Montana] / Chr. Barthelmess, photographer, Fort Keogh, Montana,” 1890. [Library of Congress](#).*

Texas in 1850, 1,600,00 in 1880, and 3,000,000 in 1900, becoming the sixth most populous state in the nation.

### III. The Indian Wars and Federal Peace Policies

The “Indian wars,” so mythologized in western folklore, were a series of sporadic, localized, and often brief engagements between U.S. military forces and various Native American groups. The more sustained and more impactful conflict, meanwhile, was economic and cultural. The vast and cyclical movement across the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, raid enemies, and trade goods was incompatible with new patterns of American settlement and railroad construction. Thomas Jefferson’s old dream that Indian groups might live isolated in the West was, in the face of

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American expansion, no longer a viable reality. Political, economic, and even humanitarian concerns intensified American efforts to isolate Indians on reservations. Although Indian removal had long been a part of federal Indian policy, following the Civil War the U.S. government redoubled its efforts. If treaties and other forms of persistent coercion would not work, more drastic measures were deemed necessary. Against the threat of confinement and the extinction of traditional ways of life, Native Americans battled the American army and the encroaching lines of American settlement.

In one of the earliest western engagements, in 1862, while the Civil War still consumed the nation, tensions erupted between Dakota Sioux and white settlers in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. The 1850 U.S. census recorded a white population of about 6,000 in Minnesota; eight years later, when it became a state, it was more than 150,000. The influx of American farmers pushed the Sioux to the breaking point. Hunting became unsustainable and those Sioux who had taken up farming found only poverty. Starvation wracked many. Then, on August 17, 1862, four young men of the Santees, a Sioux tribe, killed five white settlers near the Redwood Agency, an American administrative office. In the face of an inevitable American retaliation, and over the protests of many members, the tribe chose war. On the following day, Sioux warriors attacked settlements near the Agency. They killed 31 men, women and children. They then ambushed a U.S.

military detachment at Redwood Ferry, killing 23. The governor of Minnesota called up militia and several thousand Americans waged war against the Sioux insurgents. Fighting broke out at New Ulm, Fort Ridgely, and Birch Coulee, but the Americans broke the Indian resistance at the Battle of Wood Lake on September 23, ending the so-called Dakota War, also known as the Sioux Uprising.

More than two thousand Sioux had been taken prisoner during the fighting. Many were tried at federal forts for murder, rape, and other atrocities. 303 were found guilty and sentenced to hang, but at the last moment President Lincoln commuted all but 38 of the sentences. Terrified Minnesota settlers and government officials insisted not only that the Sioux lose much of their reservations lands and be removed further west, but that those who had fled be hunted down and placed on reservations as well. The American military gave chase and, on September 3, 1863, after a year of attrition, American military units surrounded a large encampment of Dakota Sioux. American troops killed an estimated 300 men, women, and children. Dozens more were taken prisoner. Troops spent the next two days burning winter food and supply stores to starve out the Sioux resistance, which would continue to smolder. Further south, tensions flared in Colorado. In 1851, the Treaty of Fort Laramie had secured right-of-way access for Americans passing through on their way to California and Oregon. But a gold rush in 1858 drew approximately 100,000 white goldseekers and they



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demanded new treaties be made with local Indian groups to secure land rights in the newly created Colorado Territory. Cheyenne bands splintered over the possibility of signing a new treaty that would confine them to a reservation. Settlers, already wary of raids by powerful groups of Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Comanches, meanwhile read in their local newspapers sensationalist accounts of the Sioux uprising in Minnesota. Militia leader John M. Chivington warned settlers in the summer of 1864 that the Cheyenne were dangerous savages, urged war, and promised a swift military victory. Sporadic fighting broke out. Although Chivington warned of Cheyenne savagery, the aged Cheyenne chief Black Kettle, believing that a peace treaty would be best for his people, traveled to Denver to arrange for peace talks. He and his followers traveled toward Fort Lyon in accordance with government instructions but on November 29, 1864, Chivington ordered his seven hundred militiamen to move on the Cheyenne camp near Fort Lyon at Sand Creek. The Cheyenne tried to declare their peaceful intentions but Chivington's militia cut them down. It was a slaughter. Black Kettle and about two hundred other men, women, and children were killed.

The Sand Creek Massacre was a national scandal, alternately condemned and applauded. News of the massacre reached other native groups and the American frontier erupted into conflict. Americans pushed for a new "peace policy." Congress, confronted with these tragedies and further violence,



*This photograph, taken only two years after the establishment of South Dakota, shows the dire situation of the Lakota people on what was formerly their own land. John C. Grabill, "[A young Oglala girl sitting in front of a tipi, with a puppy beside her, probably on or near Pine Ridge Reservation]," 1891. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99613799/>.*

authorized in 1868 the creation of an Indian Peace Commission. The commission's study of American Indian decried prior American policy and galvanized support for reformers. After the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant the following spring, Congress allied with prominent philanthropists to create the Board of Indian Commissioners, a permanent advisory body to oversee Indian affairs and prevent the further outbreak of violence. The Board effectively Christianized American Indian policy. Much of the

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reservation system was handed over to Protestant churches, which were tasked with finding agents and missionaries to manage reservation life. Congress hoped that religiously-minded men might fare better at creating just assimilation policies and persuading Indians to accept them. Historian Francis Paul Prucha believed that this attempt at a new “peace policy... might just have properly been labeled the ‘religious policy.’” Many female Christian missionaries played a central role in cultural re-education programs that attempted to not only instill Protestant religion but also impose traditional American gender roles and family structures. They endeavored to replace Indians’ tribal social units with small, patriarchal households. Women’s labor became a contentious issue, for very few tribes divided labor according to white middle-class gender norms. Fieldwork, the traditional domain of white males, was primarily performed by native women, who also usually controlled the products of their labor, if not the land that was worked, giving them status in society as laborers and food providers. For missionaries, the goal was to get Native women to leave the fields and engage in more proper “women’s” work—housework. Christian missionaries performed much as secular federal agents had. Few American agents could meet Native Americans on their own terms. Most viewed reservation Indians as lazy and thought of Native cultures as inferior to their own. The views of J. L. Broaddus, appointed to oversee several small Indian tribes on the Hoopa Valley reservation in California, are illustrative: in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs



*In 1874, Quanah Parker (of Comanche and English-American ancestry) led a Comanche war party into northern Texas to avenge their slain relatives. This failed attempt led to the reversal of federal policy in Washington, and eventually depleted the food source and economic livelihood of the Comanches. Parker afterwards became chief over all Comanches on the newly settled Oklahoma reservation, and, through smart investing, soon was the single richest native American of the late nineteenth century. Photograph portrait of Quanah Parker, c. 1890. [Wikimedia](#).*

for 1875, he wrote, “the great majority of them are idle, listless, careless, and improvident. They seem to take no thought about provision for the future, and many of them would not work at all if they were not compelled to do so. They would rather live upon the roots and acorns gathered by their women than to work for flour and beef.”

If the Indians could not be forced through kindness to change their ways, most agreed that it was acceptable to use force, which native groups resisted. In Texas and the Southern Plains, the Comanche, Kiowa, and

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their allies had wielded enormous influence. The Comanche in particular controlled huge swaths of territory and raided vast areas, inspiring terror from the Rocky Mountains to the interior of Northern Mexico to the Texas Gulf Coast. But after the Civil War, the U.S. military refocused its attention on the Southern Plains.

The American military first sent messengers to the Plains to find the elusive Comanche bands and ask them to come to peace negotiations at Medicine Lodge Creek in the fall of 1867. But terms were muddled: American officials believed that Comanche bands had accepted reservation life, while Comanche leaders believed they were guaranteed vast lands for buffalo hunting. Comanche bands used designated reservation lands as a base from which to collect supplies and federal annuity goods while continuing to hunt, trade, and raid American settlements in Texas.

Confronted with renewed Comanche raiding, particularly by the famed war leader Quanah Parker, the U.S. military finally proclaimed that all Indians who were not settled on the reservation by the fall of 1874 would be considered “hostile.” The Red River War began when many Comanche bands refused to resettle and the American military launched expeditions into the Plains to subdue them, culminating in the defeat of the remaining roaming bands in the canyonlands of the Texas Panhandle. Cold and hungry, with their way of life

already decimated by soldiers, settlers, cattlemen, and railroads, the last free Comanche bands were moved to the reservation at Fort Sill, in what is now southwestern Oklahoma.

On the northern Plains, the Sioux people had yet to fully surrender. Following the troubles of 1862, many bands had signed treaties with the United States and drifted into the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies to collect rations and annuities, but many continued to resist American encroachment and a large number of Sioux refused to sign and remained fiercely independent. These “non-treaty” Indians, such as those led by famous chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, saw no reason to sign treaties that they believed would not be fully honored.

Then, in 1874, an American expedition to the Black Hills of South Dakota discovered gold. White prospectors flooded the territory. Caring very little about Indian rights, and very much about getting rich, they brought the Sioux situation again to its breaking point. Aware that U.S. citizens were violating treaty provisions, but unwilling to prevent them from searching for gold, federal officials pressured the western Sioux to sign a new treaty that would transfer control of the Black Hills to the United States while General Philip Sheridan quietly moved U.S. troops into the region. Initial clashes between U.S. troops and Sioux warriors resulted in several Sioux victories that, combined with the visions of Sitting Bull, who had dreamed of an even



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more triumphant victory, attracted Sioux bands who had already signed treaties but now joined to fight.

In late June 1876, a division of the 7th Cavalry Regiment led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer was sent up a trail into the Black Hills as an advance guard for a larger force. Custer's men approached a camp along a river known to the Sioux as Greasy Grass, but marked on Custer's map as Little Bighorn, and found, given the influx of "treaty" Sioux, as well as aggrieved Cheyenne and other allies, had swelled the population of the village far beyond Custer's estimation. Custer's 7th Cavalry was vastly outnumbered and he and 268 of his men were killed.

Custer's fall shocked the nation. Cries for a swift American response reprisals filled the public sphere and military expeditions were sent out to crush native resistance. The Sioux splintered off into the wilderness and began a campaign of intermittent resistance but, outnumbered and suffering after a long, hungry winter, Crazy Horse led a band of Oglala Sioux to surrender in May of 1877. Other bands gradually followed until finally, in July 1881, Sitting Bull and his followers at last laid down their weapons and came to the reservation. Indigenous powers had been defeated. The Plains, it seemed, had been pacified.

### IV. Beyond the Plains

Nomadic Plains peoples were not the only ones who suffered as a result of American expansion. Groups



*Railroads made the settlement and growth of the West possible. By the late nineteenth century, maps of the mid-West like this one were filled with advertisements of how quickly a traveler could get nearly anywhere in the country. Map. Environment and Society.*

like the Utes and Paitues were pushed out of the Rocky Mountains by U.S. expansion into Colorado and away from the northern Great Basin by the expanding Mormon population in Utah Territory in the 1850s and 1860s. Faced with a shrinking territorial base, members of these two groups often joined the U.S. military in its campaigns in the southwest against other powerful Native groups like the Hopi, Zuni, Jicarilla Apache, and especially the Navajo, whose population of at least 10,000 engaged in both farming and sheep herding on some of the most valuable lands acquired by the U.S. after the Mexican War.

Conflicts between the U.S. military, American settlers, and Native populations increased throughout the 1850s. By 1862, General James Carleton began searching for a reservation where he could remove the Navajo and end their threat to U.S. expansion in the southwest. Carleton selected a dry, almost treeless site

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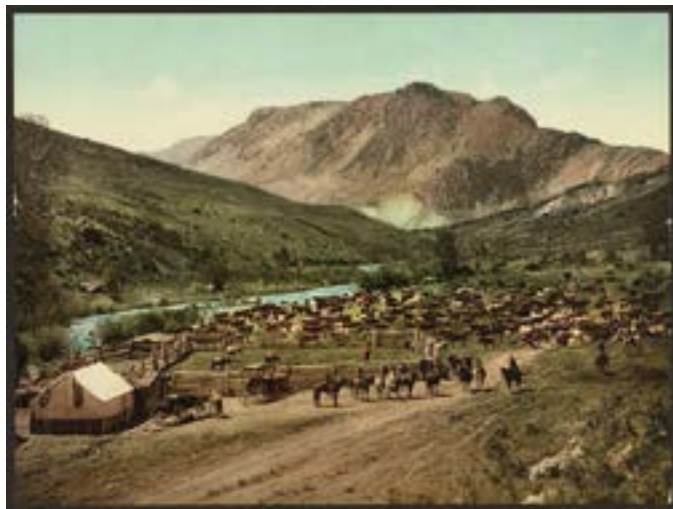
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in the Bosque Redondo Valley, 300 miles from the Navajo homeland.

In April 1863, Carleton gave orders to Colonel Kit Carson to round up the entire Navajo population and escort them to Bosque Redondo. Those who resisted would be shot. Thus began a period of Navajo history called the Long Walk, which remains deeply important to Navajo people today. The Long Walk was not a single event, but a series of forced marches to the reservation at Bosque Redondo between August 1863 and December 1866. Conditions at Bosque Redondo were horrible. Provisions provided by the U.S. army were not only inadequate, but often spoiled; disease was rampant, and thousands of Navajos died.

By 1868, it had become clear that life at the reservation was unsustainable. General William Tecumseh Sherman visited the reservation and wrote of the inhumane situation in which the Navajo were essentially kept as prisoners, but lack of cost-effectiveness was the main reason Sherman recommended that the Navajo be returned to their homeland in the west. On June 1, 1868, the Navajo signed the Treaty of Bosque Redondo, an unprecedented treaty in the history of U.S.-Indian relations in which the Navajo were able to return from the reservation to their homeland.

The destruction of Indian nations in California and the Pacific Northwest likewise receives significantly less attention because it lacks the drama of the final battles



*This photochrom print (a new technology in the late nineteenth century that colorized images from a black-and-white negative) depicts a cattle round up in Cimarron, a crossroads of the late-nineteenth-century cattle drives. Detroit Photographic Co., "Colorado. 'Round up' on the Cimarron," c. 1898. [Library of Congress](#).*

on the Plains, but Native peoples in these regions also experienced violence, population decline, and territorial loss. For example, in 1872, the California/Oregon border erupted in violence when the Modoc people left the reservation of their historic enemies, the Klamath Indians, and returned to an area known as Lost River. Americans had settled the region after Modoc removal several years before, and they complained bitterly of the Natives' return. The U.S. military arrived when 52 remaining Modoc warriors, led by a man called Captain Jack, refused to return to the reservation and holed up in defensive positions along the state border. They fought a guerrilla war for eleven months in which at least 200 U.S. troops were killed before they were finally forced to surrender.

The treaties that had been signed with numerous Native nations in California in the 1850s were never rat-

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ified by the Senate. Over one hundred distinct Native groups had lived in California before the Spanish and American conquests, but by 1880, the Native population of California had collapsed from about 150,000 on the eve of the gold rush, to a little less than 20,000. A few reservation areas were eventually set up by the U.S. government to collect what remained of the Native population, but the majority were dispersed throughout California. This was partly the result of state laws from the 1850s that allowed white Californians to obtain both Native children and adults as “apprentice” laborers by merely bringing the desired laborer before a judge and promising to feed, clothe, and eventually release them after a period of “service” that ranged from ten to twenty years. Thousands of California’s Natives were thus pressed into a form of slave labor that supported the growing mining, agricultural, railroad, and cattle industries.

### V. Western Economic Expansion: Railroads and Cattle

As native peoples were pushed out, American settlers poured in. Aside from agriculture and the extraction of natural resources—such as timber and precious metals—two major industries fueled the new western economy: ranching and railroads. Both developed in connection with each other and both shaped the collective American memory of the post-Civil War “Wild West.”



*Cowboys like the one pictured here worked the drives that supplied Chicago and other mid-western cities with the necessary cattle to supply and help grow the meat-packing industry. Their work was obsolete by the turn of the century, yet their image lived on through vaudeville shows and films that romanticized life in the West. John C.H. Grabill, “The Cow Boy,” c. 1888. [Library of Congress](#).*

As one booster put it, “the West is purely a railroad enterprise.” No economic enterprise rivaled the railroads in scale, scope, or sheer impact. No other businesses had attracted such enormous sums of capital, and no other ventures ever received such lavish government subsidies (business historian Alfred Chandler called the railroads the “first modern business enterprise”). By “annihilating time and space”—by connecting the vastness of the continent—the railroads transformed the United States and they made the American West.

No railroad enterprise so captured the American imagination—or federal support—as the transcontinental railroad. The transcontinental railroad crossed western plains and mountains and linked the West Coast with the rail networks of the

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eastern United States. Constructed from the west by the Central Pacific and from the east by the Union Pacific, the two roads were linked in Utah in 1869 to great national fanfare. But such a herculean task was not easy, and national legislators threw enormous subsidies at railroad companies, a part of the Republican Party platform since 1856. The 1862 Pacific Railroad Act gave bonds of between \$16,000 and \$48,000 for each mile of construction and provided vast land grants to railroad companies. Between 1850 and 1871 alone, railroad companies received more than 175,000,000 acres of public land, an area larger than the state of Texas. Investors reaped enormous profits. As one congressional opponent put it in the 1870s, “If there be profit, the corporations may take it; if there be loss, the Government must bear it.”

If railroads attracted unparalleled subsidies and investments, they also created enormous labor demands. By 1880, approximately 400,000 men—or nearly 2.5% of the nation’s entire workforce—labored in the railroad industry. Much of the work was dangerous and low-paying and companies relied heavily on immigrant labor to build tracks. Companies employed Irish workers in the early-nineteenth century and Chinese workers in the late-nineteenth. By 1880, over 200,000 Chinese migrants lived in the United States. Once the rails were laid, companies still needed a large workforce to keep the trains running. Much railroad work was dangerous, but perhaps the most hazardous work was done by



*Red Cloud and American Horse – two of the most renowned Oglala chiefs – are seen clasping hands in front of a tipi on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Both men served as delegates to Washington, D.C., after years of actively fighting the American government. John C. Grabill, “Red Cloud and American Horse.” The two most noted chiefs now living,” 1891. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99613806/>.*

brakeman. Before the advent of automatic braking, an engineer would blow the “down brake” whistle and brakemen would scramble to the top of the moving train, regardless of the weather conditions, and run from car to car manually turning brakes. Speed was necessary, and any slip could be fatal. Brakemen were also responsible for “coupling” the cars, attaching them together with a large pin. It was easy to lose a hand or finger and even a slight mistake could cause cars to collide.



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The railroads boomed. In 1850, there were 9,000 miles of railroads in the United States. In 1900 there were 190,000, including several transcontinental lines. To manage these vast networks of freight and passenger lines, companies converged rails at hub cities. Of all the Midwestern and Western cities that blossomed from the bridging of western resources and eastern capital in the late nineteenth century, Chicago was the most spectacular. It grew from 200 inhabitants in 1833 to over a million by 1890. By 1893 it and the region from which it drew were completely transformed. The World's Columbian Exposition that year trumpeted the city's progress, and broader technological progress, with typical Gilded Age ostentation. A huge, gleaming (but temporary) "White City" was built in neoclassical style to house all the features of the fair and cater to the needs of the visitors who arrived from all over the world. Highlighted in the title of this world's fair were the changes that had overtaken North America since Columbus made landfall four centuries earlier. Chicago became the most important western hub, and served as the gateway between the farm and ranch country of the Great Plains and eastern markets. Railroads brought cattle from Texas to Chicago for slaughter, where they were then processed into packaged meats and shipped by refrigerated rail to New York City and other eastern cities. Such hubs became the central nodes in a rapid-transit economy that increasingly spread across the entire continent linking goods and people together in a new national network.



*Burial of the dead after the massacre of Wounded Knee. U.S. Soldiers putting Indians in common grave; some corpses are frozen in different positions. South Dakota. 1891. [Library of Congress](#).*

It was this national network that created the fabled cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. The first cattle drives across the central Plains began soon after the Civil War. Railroads created the market for ranching, and because for the few years after the war that railroads connected eastern markets with important market hubs such as Chicago, but had yet to reach Texas ranchlands, ranchers began driving cattle north, out of the Lone Star state, to major railroad terminuses in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Ranchers used well-worn trails, such as the Chisholm Trail, for drives, but conflicts arose with Native Americans in the Indian Territory and farmers in Kansas who disliked the intrusion of large and environmentally destructive herds onto their own hunting, ranching, and farming lands. Other trails, such as the Western Trail, the Goodnight-Loving Trail, and the Shawnee Trail, were therefore blazed.

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Cattle drives were difficult tasks for the crews of men who managed the herds. Historians estimate the number of men who worked as cowboys in the late-nineteenth century to be between 12,000 and 40,000. Perhaps a fourth were African American, and more were likely Mexican or Mexican American. Much about the American cowboys evolved from Mexican *vaqueros*: cowboys adopted Mexican practices, gear, and terms such as “rodeo,” “bronco,” and “lasso.”

While most cattle drivers were men, there are at least sixteen verifiable accounts of women participating in the drives. Some, like Molly Dyer Goodnight, accompanied their husbands. Others, like Lizzie Johnson Williams, helped drive their own herds. Williams made at least three known trips with her herds up the Chisholm Trail.

Many cowboys hoped one day to become ranch owners themselves, but employment was insecure and wages were low. Beginners could expect to earn around \$20-25 per month, and those with years of experience might earn \$40-45. Trail bosses could earn over \$50 per month. And it was tough work. On a cattle drive, cowboys worked long hours and faced extremes of heat and cold and intense blowing dust. They subsisted on limited diets with irregular supplies.

But if workers of cattle earned low wages, owners and investors could receive riches. At the end of the Civil War, a steer worth \$4 in Texas could fetch \$40

in Kansas. Although profits slowly leveled off, large profits could still be made. And yet, by the 1880s, the great cattle drives were largely done. The railroads had created them, and the railroads ended them: railroad lines pushed into Texas and made the great drives obsolete. But ranching still brought profits and the Plains were better suited for grazing than for agriculture and western ranchers continued supplying beef for national markets.

Ranching was just one of many western industries that depended upon the railroads. By linking the Plains with national markets and rapidly moving people and goods, the railroads made the modern American West.

## VI. The Allotment Era and Resistance in the Native West

As the rails moved into the West, and more and more Americans followed, the situation for native groups deteriorated even further. Treaties negotiated between the United States and Native groups had typically promised that if tribes agreed to move to specific reservation lands, they would hold those lands collectively. But as American westward migration mounted, and open lands closed, white settlers began to argue that Indians had more than their fair share of land, that the reservations were too big and that Indians were using the land “inefficiently,” that they still preferred nomadic hunting instead of intensive farming and ranching.



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By the 1880s, Americans increasingly championed legislation to allow the transfer of Indian lands to farmers and ranchers while many argued that allotting Indian lands to individual Native Americans, rather than to tribes, would encourage American-style agriculture and finally put Indians who had previously resisted the efforts of missionaries and federal officials on the path to “civilization.”

Passed by Congress on February 8, 1887, the Dawes General Allotment Act splintered Native American reservations into individual family homesteads. Each head of a Native family was to be allotted 160 acres, the typical size of a claim that any settler could establish on federal lands under the provisions of the Homestead Act. Single individuals over the age of 18 would receive an 80 acre allotment, and orphaned children received 40 acres. A four year timeline was established for Indian peoples to make their allotment selections. If at the end of that time no selection had been made, the Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to appoint an agent to make selections for the remaining tribal members. To protect Indians from being swindled by unscrupulous land speculators, all allotments were to be held in trust—they could not be sold by allottees—for 25 years. Lands that remained unclaimed by tribal members after allotment would revert to federal control and be sold to American settlers.

Americans touted the Dawes Act as an uplifting humanitarian reform, but it upended Indian lifestyles



*American frontierswoman and professional scout Martha Jane Canary was better known to America as Calamity Jane. A figure in western folklore during her life and after, Calamity Jane was a central character in many of the increasingly popular novels and films that romanticized western life in the twentieth century. “[Martha Canary, 1852-1903, (“Calamity Jane”), full-length portrait, seated with rifle as General Crook’s scout],” c. 1895. Library of Congress.*

and left Indian groups without sovereignty over their lands. The act claimed that to protect Indian property rights, it was necessary to extend “the protection of the laws of the United States... over the Indians.” Tribal governments and legal principles could be superseded, or dissolved and replaced, by U.S. laws. Under the terms of the Dawes Act, native groups struggled to hold on to some measure of tribal sovereignty.

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The stresses of conquest unsettled generations of Native Americans. Many took comfort from the words of prophets and holy men. In Nevada, on January 1, 1889, Northern Paiute prophet Wovoka experienced a great revelation. He had traveled, he said, from his earthly home in western Nevada to heaven and returned during a solar eclipse to prophesy to his people. “You must not hurt anybody or do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always,” he exhorted. And they must, he said, participate in a religious ceremony that came to be known as the Ghost Dance. If the people lived justly and danced the Ghost Dance, Wovoka said, their ancestors would rise from the dead, droughts would dissipate, the whites in the West would vanish, and the buffalo would once again roam the Plains.

Native American prophets had often confronted American imperial power. Some prophets, including Wovoka, incorporated Christian elements like heaven and a Messiah figure into indigenous spiritual traditions. And so if it was far from unique, Wovoka’s prophecy nevertheless caught on quickly and spread beyond the Paiutes. From across the West, members of the Arapaho, Bannock, Cheyenne, and Shoshone nations, among others, adopted the Ghost Dance religion. Perhaps the most avid Ghost Dancers—and certainly the most famous—were the Lakota Sioux.

The Lakota Sioux were in dire straits. South Dakota, formed out of land that had once belonged by treaty to the Lakotas, became a state in 1889. White



William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody helped commercialize the cowboy life-style, building a mythology around life in the Old West that produced big bucks for men like Cody. Courier Lithography Company, “‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody,” 1900. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Courier_Lithography_Company_-_%22Buffalo_Bill%22_Cody_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Courier\\_Lithography\\_Company\\_-\\_%22Buffalo\\_Bill%22\\_Cody\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Courier_Lithography_Company_-_%22Buffalo_Bill%22_Cody_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg).

homesteaders had poured in, reservations were carved up and diminished, starvation set in, corrupt federal agents cut food rations, and drought hit the Plains. Many Lakotas feared a future as the landless subjects of a growing American empire when a delegation of eleven men, led by Kicking Bear, joined Ghost Dance pilgrims on the rails westward to Nevada and returned to spread the revival in the Dakotas.

The energy and message of the revivals frightened Indian agents, who began arresting Indian leaders. The Chief Sitting Bull, along with several other whites and Indians, were killed in December, 1890, during a botched arrest, convincing many bands to flee the reservations to join the fugitive bands further west, where Lakota adherents of the Ghost Dance were preaching that the Ghost Dancers would be immune to bullets.

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Two weeks later, an American cavalry unit intercepted a band of 350 Lakotas, including over 100 women and children, under the chief Spotted Elk (later known as Bigfoot). They were escorted to the Wounded Knee Creek where they encamped for the night. The following morning, December 29, the American cavalrymen entered the camp to disarm Spotted Elk's band. Tensions flared, a shot was fired, and a skirmish became a massacre. The Americans fired their heavy weaponry indiscriminately into the camp. Two dozen cavalrymen had been killed by the Lakotas' concealed weapons or by friendly fire, but, when the guns went silent, between 150 and 300 native men, women, and children were dead.

Wounded Knee marked the end of sustained, armed Native American resistance in the West. Individuals would continue to resist the pressures of assimilation and preserve traditional cultural practices, but sustained military defeats, the loss of sovereignty over land and resources, and the onset of crippling poverty on the reservations marked the final decades of the nineteenth century as a particularly dark era for America's western tribes. But, for Americans, it became mythical.

## VII. Rodeos, Wild West Shows, and the Mythic American West

"The American West" conjures visions of tipis, cabins, cowboys, Indians, farm wives in sunbonnets, and outlaws with six-shooters. Such images pervade

American culture, but they are as old as the West itself: novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows mythologized the American West throughout the post-Civil War era.

In the 1860s, Americans devoured dime novels that embellished the lives of real-life individuals such as Calamity Jane and Billy the Kid. Owen Wister's novels, especially *The Virginian*, established the character of the cowboy as a gritty stoic with a rough exterior but the courage and heroism needed to rescue people from train robbers, Indians, or cattle rustlers. Such images were later reinforced when the emergence of rodeo added to popular conceptions of the American West. Rodeos began as small roping and riding contests among cowboys in towns near ranches or at camps at the end of the cattle trails. In Pecos, Texas, on July 4, 1883, cowboys from two ranches, the Hash Knife and the W Ranch, competed in roping and riding contests as a way to settle an argument and is recognized by historians of the West as the first real rodeo. Casual contests evolved into planned celebrations. Many were scheduled around national holidays, such as Independence Day, or during traditional roundup times in the spring and fall. Early rodeos took place in open grassy areas—not arenas—and included calf and steer roping and roughstock events such as bronc riding. They gained popularity and soon dedicated rodeo circuits developed. Although about 90% of rodeo contestants were men, women helped to popularize the rodeo and several popular women bronc riders, such as Bertha

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Kaepernick, entered men's events, until around 1916 when women's competitive participation was curtailed. Americans also experienced the "Wild West"—the mythical West imagined in so many dime novel—by attending traveling Wild West shows, arguably the unofficial national entertainment of the United States from the 1880s to the 1910s. Wildly popular across the country, the shows traveled throughout the eastern United States and even across Europe and showcased what was already a mythic frontier life. William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody was the first to recognize the broad national appeal of the stock "characters" of the American West—cowboys, Indians, sharpshooters, cavalrymen, and rangers—and put them all together into a single massive traveling extravaganza. Operating out of Omaha, Nebraska, Buffalo Bill launched his touring show in 1883. Cody himself shunned the word "show," fearing that it implied an exaggeration or misrepresentation of the West. He instead called his production "Buffalo Bill's Wild West." He employed real cowboys and Indians in his productions. But it was still, of course, a show. It was entertainment, little different in its broad outlines from contemporary theater. Storylines depicted westward migration, life on the Plains, and Indian attacks, all punctuated by "cowboy fun": bucking broncos, roping cattle, and sharpshooting contests.

Buffalo Bill, joined by shrewd business partners skilled in marketing, turned his shows into a sensation. But he was not alone. Gordon William

"Pawnee Bill" Lillie, another popular Wild West showman, got his start in 1886 when Cody employed him as an interpreter for Pawnee members of the show. Lillie went on to create his own production in 1888, "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West." He was Cody's only real competitor in the business until 1908, when the two men combined their shows to create a new extravaganza, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East" (most people called it the "Two Bills Show"). It was an unparalleled spectacle. The cast included American cowboys, Mexican *vaqueros*, Native Americans, Russian Cossacks, Japanese acrobats, and an Australian aboriginal.

Cody and Lillie knew that Native Americans fascinated audiences in the United States and Europe and both featured them prominently in their Wild West shows. Most Americans believed that Native cultures were disappearing or had already, and felt a sense of urgency to see their dances, hear their song, and be captivated by their bareback riding skills and their elaborate buckskin and feather attire. The shows certainly veiled the true cultural and historic value of so many Native demonstrations, and the Indian performers were curiosities to white Americans, but the shows were one of the few ways for many Native Americans to make a living in the late nineteenth century.

In an attempt to appeal to women, Cody recruited Annie Oakley, a female sharpshooter who thrilled

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onlookers with her many stunts. Billed as “Little Sure Shot,” she shot apples off her poodle’s head and the ash from her husband’s cigar, clenched trustingly between his teeth. Gordon Lillie’s wife, May Manning Lillie, also became a skilled shot and performed as, “World’s Greatest Lady Horseback Shot.” Female sharpshooters were Wild West show staples. As many 80 toured the country at the shows’ peak. But if such acts challenged expected Victorian gender roles, female performers were typically careful to blunt criticism by maintaining their feminine identity—for example, by riding sidesaddle and wearing full skirts and corsets—during their acts.

The western “cowboys and Indians” mystique, perpetuated in novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows, was rooted in romantic nostalgia and, perhaps, in the anxieties that many felt in the late-nineteenth century’s new seemingly “soft” industrial world of factory and office work. The mythical cowboy’s “aggressive masculinity” was the seemingly perfect antidote for middle- and upper-class, city-dwelling Americans who feared they “had become over-civilized” and longed for what Theodore Roosevelt called the “strenuous life.” Roosevelt himself, a scion of a wealthy New York family and later a popular American president, turned a brief tenure as a failed Dakota ranch owner into a potent part of his political image. Americans looked longingly to the West, whose romance would continue to pull at generations of Americans.

### VIII. The West as History: The Turner Thesis

In 1893, the American Historical Association met during that year’s World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The young Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his “frontier thesis,” one of the most influential theories of American history, in his essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.”

Turner looked back at the historical changes in the West and saw, instead of a tsunami of war and plunder and industry, waves of “civilization” that washed across the continent. A frontier line “between savagery and civilization” had moved west from the earliest English settlements in Massachusetts and Virginia across the Appalachians to the Mississippi and finally across the Plains to California and Oregon. Turner invited his audience to “stand at Cumberland Gap [the famous pass through the Appalachian Mountains], and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file—the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by.”

Americans, Turner said, had been forced by necessity to build a rough-hewn civilization out of the frontier, giving the nation its exceptional hustle and its democratic spirit and distinguishing North America from the stale monarchies of Europe. Moreover,



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the *style* of history Turner called for was democratic as well, arguing that the work of ordinary people (in this case, pioneers) deserved the same study as that of great statesmen. Such was a novel approach in 1893.

But Turner looked ominously to the future. The Census Bureau in 1890 had declared the frontier closed. There was no longer a discernible line running north to south that, Turner said, any longer divided civilization from savagery. Turner worried for the United States' future: what would become of the nation without the safety valve of the frontier? It was a common sentiment. Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Turner that his essay “put into shape a good deal of thought that has been floating around rather loosely.”

The history of the West was many-sided and it was made by many persons and peoples. Turner's thesis was rife with faults, not only its bald Anglo Saxon chauvinism—in which non-whites fell before the march of “civilization” and Chinese and Mexican immigrants were invisible—but in its utter inability to appreciate the impact of technology and government subsidies and large-scale economic enterprises alongside the work of hardy pioneers. Still, Turner's thesis held an almost canonical position among historians for much of the twentieth century and, more importantly, captured Americans' enduring romanticization of the West and the simplification of a long and complicated story into a march of progress.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*



# UNIT 2

## TIMELINE

### A Timeline of The West: 1830-1924

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1830 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Indian Removal Act</b> passed.</li> </ul>   |
| 1835 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Texas Rebellion began.</li> </ul>  |
| 1845 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texas admitted to the Union as 28th state.</li> </ul>  |
| 1846 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>President Polk's war message to Congress starting the <b>Mexican-American War</b>.</li> </ul>  |
| 1848 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gold is discovered in California.</li> <li>The <b>Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo</b> signed.</li> </ul>   |
| 1850 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California admitted to the Union.</li> </ul>   |
| 1864 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Navajo Wars ended, started 1861.</li> </ul>  |
| 1868 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Red Cloud's</b> War ended, started 1866.</li> </ul>   |
| 1869 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The First <b>Transcontinental Railroad</b> completed.</li> </ul>   |
| 1876 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Battle of Little Bighorn</b>.</li> </ul>  |
| 1877 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black Hills War ended, started 1876.</li> <li><b>Nez Perce</b> War</li> </ul>  |
| 1878 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indian Bureau</b> cited for corruption.</li> </ul>  |
| 1879 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Carlisle Indian School</b>, run by Richard Henry Pratt, in Pennsylvania admitted first class of students (Lakota).</li> <li><b>Chief Joseph</b> of Nez Perce addressed Congress.</li> </ul> |
| 1880 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Civilization Regulations</b> established by Congress.</li> </ul>  |
| 1882 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assimilationist organization the <b>Indian Rights Association</b> formed.</li> </ul>   |
| 1883 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supreme Court ruled that Native Americans were born "alien and a dependent."</li> </ul>  |

# UNIT 2

## TIMELINE

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1885 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show</b> featured <b>Sitting Bull</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Major Crimes Act</b> passed by Congress to give federal court jurisdiction over Indians who committed certain crimes.</li> </ul> |
| 1886 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apache Wars ended, started 1954.</li> </ul>   |
| 1887 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Dawes Severalty Act</b> passed.</li> </ul>   |
| 1888 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffalo disappeared; tribes dependent on Federal Government.</li> <li>• The <b>Sioux Act</b> divided the Sioux Reservation and opened land to settlers.</li> </ul>  |
| 1889 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oklahoma Land Rush opens Native lands for settlement.</li> </ul>  |
| 1890 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sioux Wars</b> ended, started 1850s.</li> <li>• <b>Wounded Knee</b> Massacre.</li> </ul>   |
| 1891 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ghost Dance War</b> ended, started 1890.</li> <li>• Indian Education Act passed.</li> </ul>  |
| 1906 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Antiquities Act</b> passed, declaring that Indian bones/objects found on Native lands were United States property.</li> </ul>  |
| 1911 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Society of American Indians</b> founded as first civil-rights organization for Native peoples.</li> </ul>  |
| 1912 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arizona admitted to the Union, as last of contiguous 48 states.</li> </ul>  |
| 1917 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War I started, and around 17,000 Native Americans served.</li> </ul>  |
| 1918 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian veterans granted citizenship</li> </ul>  |
| 1919 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Native American Church</b> founded.</li> </ul>   |
| 1924 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indian Citizenship Act</b> passed, giving citizenship and voting rights to all American Indians.</li> </ul>  |

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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## Industrialization and Urbanization in Theme Analysis

American Industrialization, although starting well before the Civil War, did not flourish until after the nation settled its sectional differences. By the late 19th century the North still was ahead in the industrialization process, but the South (historically referred to as the New South) started to industrialize as well. The strong agriculture base that the nation allowed the industrialized East to grow and expand. The nation was not only able to supply its workers with food, but the increased demand for the production of agricultural technologies in the West linked it directly to the industrialized East, which produced the machines needed by the farmers.

All of this combined to further the nation's rise as a progressive world power. After the Civil War, industrialization became the nation's economic priority. The U.S. wanted to compete with, if not outdo, European industrial production. With expanded industrialization came many social and economic problems ranging from monopolies, poverty, immigration and nativism, anti-unionism, overcrowding, filth, infrastructure problems, corruption in urban politics etc.... Generations of Americans fought to improve these conditions. It took time, though, for government and technology to "solve" these problems. This, in part was because the problems were extensive, and often a solution to one problem created another.

These units examine the phenomenon of U.S. industrial and urban growth, by looking at the major industries of the era, the growth of urban America, and the problems resultant of both. It also looks at the worker and his/her plight in this industrial-urban environment, which was not only a difficult one, but also an unfriendly, hostile, violent and often deadly one. We are setting the tone for the changes (social, political, and economic) to come, and many of these changes only resulted with the help of government at a variety of levels, including the federal.

During this era, the U.S. built its world power status upon its massive industrial infrastructure and agricultural base. Also, as a result of this phase, the role of the federal government expanded into the regulation of business, governmental reforms, and urban management in an unprecedented way. The government encouraged the spread of US products and corporations around the world. For example, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was popular in the United Kingdom and Europe. In 1887, the troupe went to the UK as part of the American Exhibition and did a command performance for Queen Victoria. The show returned in the late 1880s-1890s. Woolworth's was an American chain store that started in New York state in 1878 but then later opened branches in England, as well, in the early 20th century. And, the Hoover Corporation started in Canton, Ohio, but also had a major corporate headquarters and manufacturing centers in the United Kingdom in the early 20th century. The

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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‘electric suction sweeper’ was one of the most popular household appliances purchased in the early 20th century. The Hoover vacuum became so popular that in the UK to this day many say that they need to “Hoover” instead of vacuum.

## Background to Industrialization

The three major industries of the era were: railroads, oil, and steel. And, the federal government, though generally taking a hands-off position toward business in a regulatory fashion during this time, encouraged the growth of these industries and gave public lands to the railroads for the purpose of expanding that industry.

None of this could have happened, though, if it were not for the strong agricultural base that the US had. The fact that the nation could produce enough food to feed its population three times over daily (not that every person had that access to food) meant that enough food was typically available for the urban, working populations. On the eve of the second wave of industrialization in the US in 1865, US farmers had developed over 400 million acres of land, and as learned about in the unit on the West, the federal government promoted this via the passage of legislation like the Homestead Act of 1862. Between 1862-1890, between various factors including government hand-outs to the railroads, 48 million acres of public land went into private

hands. This meant more commercial corps and with agribusiness the rise of new technologies and farming methods that pushed output up and drove prices down. US agriculture was the industry that led to an increase in: US shipping exports, railroad growth, and manufacturing (both in terms of feeding the labor supply and in the demand for equipment. The internal empire being built by the US at the same time as the nation industrialized ensured access to the minerals, lumber, and food supply necessary for that industrialization to flourish.

Additionally, the US was poised to grow industrially due to the influx of cheap, immigrant labor, the mobilization of capital in banking centers such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia (where shipping, industry, and banking merged), and government support. Other examples of government support for industry are the following:

- During the Civil War the government encouraged entrepreneurs to provide goods to the US government, thus encouraging the growth of manufacturing
- In 1861, the government increased the tariff to protect US manufacturing (this is called a protective tariff).
- The government encouraged the development of the public domain (land owned and controlled by the federal government)
- In 1862, the government passed the Land-

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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Grant College Act, giving public land to state colleges that taught engineering, agriculture, and education

## The Industries & Their Labor

### Railroads

Railroads became a symbol of powerful changes in America during the time, both good and bad. The good that most Americans saw was economic growth; the bad was the railroad as a symbol of too powerful, government-aligned “big-business.” As the railroads expanded, the industry sought to standardize the national network by: using one standard gage of track, building more bridges across major rivers, and establishing more transcontinental lines. Between 1865 and 1890, the miles of track went from 35,000 to 167,000 and iron rails were replaced by steel. More efficient and faster trains also were developed. By the 1880s, things had changed enough to create a new national, railroad network.

More so, railroads were big business. The demands of operating a railroad were extensive, and large, corporate bureaucracies emerged to run (administrate) the railroads. These corporate structures became models for other industries, as railroad sought investors nationally and internationally, sold bonds and stocks and started to consolidate into regional companies for management purposes (e.g. the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, Northern Pacific, New York Central, and Pennsylvania Railroads). The man

who led the way on this was banker turned railroad baron, J.P. Morgan, and the process of consolidation was named after him (Morganziation), because he would only invest in railroads if they consolidated and created a centrally located system. With the investments, government connections, and corporate strategies of Morgan and others, Chicago and other cities became railroad hubs with manufacturing (machine tool) industries to support the nation’s interconnected system of rail and all that went with it.

For workers on the railroads, they faced the highest rates of death and injury (particularly maiming) than in any other industry at the time, including mining. Within five years of employment, historical data shows that about 70% of workers were injured and over 1,600 were killed. The railroads, though, fought against the adoption of state-level safety and health standards for workers, arguing that it would cost too much money. Unions associated with the railroads initially were formed as craft unions, e.g. Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (1863), Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen (1868), Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (1873/1906), Switchmen’s Union of North America (1876), and others throughout the late 19th century. Mainly these unions fought for better pay and working conditions.

Though by mid-20th century the railroads struggled under the competition from automotive and air shipping and passenger travel, they remain the most life-altering, important, revolutionary change in the

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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history of transportation the world has seen. Nothing has imparted such a dramatic sense of what was possible across time and space *in terms of transportation* since.

## Steel

When one thinks about steel, a few specifics immediately come to mind: skyscrapers, railroads, steel-tipped plows, and Andrew Carnegie. By 1875, Carnegie, due to his aggressive business strategies, owned the nation's largest steel mill. His main approach to being able to undersell competitors and cut costs was to pay labor very cheaply and work them long hours and to use vertical integration as a business strategy. Vertical integration was when all of the materials required to produce a product were owned by the company. Some of Carnegie's success came from an investment in scientific research, as well, in order to advance processes like the Bessemer or Kelly Process which used a specially designed furnace and carbon process to burn out the impurities from the molten iron. Workers in the steel mills faced extremely hot temperatures, dangerous conditions, and long hours. Many employed by the steel mills, though were considered skilled labor, and thus they affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in the 19th century, prior to the development of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers - a predecessor to the United Steelworkers.

## Oil

The demand for oil jumped when one John D. Rockefeller of Cleveland Ohio developed the oil refining industry for the purpose of developing products from crude oil. Of particular demand was kerosene, but also lubricants for machines and petroleum. He developed Standard Oil in 1870, and he used money to invest in new technologies to keep his business highly competitive and the most efficient refiner in the nation. Rockefeller was the most aggressive businessman of his age, forming a cartel (or pool) - a group of independent businesses that cooperated to control the production, pricing, and marketing of goods by members of the cartel. He was famous for the practice of horizontal integration in which one business buys out similar ones, thus creating a monopoly. Later, Rockefeller also adopted vertical integration by controlling oil fields and the marketing of oil. The world's first billionaire, Rockefeller also opened an investment bank to provide capital to new, expanding companies. To this day, the power of the oil industry started by Rockefeller impacts the country's and the world's economy, politics, and standard of living. Workers in the oil industry ranged from skilled to unskilled, so they affiliated with unions accordingly, typically either the American Federation of Labor and other specialized unions.



# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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## Unions

The main types of labor during this time were: unskilled (typically immigrant), skilled, women, and children. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution and its growth, artisans (skilled craftsmen) typically were replaced by machines that could mass-produce goods and that were run by unskilled labor. Skilled labor in the era of industrialization was tied to more technical processes and demanded the highest wages, while unskilled labor was seen as expendable and thus subjected to the harshest of conditions and lowest of pay. Desperate for work, immigrants from Europe, but also from Asia (particularly in the West) filled the factories and built the railways. Of the worst paid were women and children, both of whom were seen as the most unskilled. Thus, male-dominated labor unions often fought to end both, due to the fact that as labor they competed in the labor pool for jobs with adult males. A woman's status as a laborer was shaped by her marital standing. Single women were employed by factories in large numbers and had more job options, particularly in fields most associated with "women's work," e.g. food processing, clothing manufacturing, and the like. Married women were expected to maintain domestic norms, while also typically contributing to the family income by working from the home (though there were those who did work within the factory setting), e.g. doing sewing, button-making, laundering, taking in borders, rolling cigars, etc... Women were paid less because it was assumed that they had or would have a husband to provide for them, and thus they were "temporary"

labor. On average women by the late 19th century, a woman could earn as little \$5.00/week for 70 hours of work. Children earned even less than women, and they worked at all ages, usually starting in their pre-teen years. Some went to school for half of a day, while many did not. Since children by nature like to play, the combination of youth and the conditions in factories and mines often led to untimely and gruesome deaths. The growth of labor and unions continued into the 20th century as workers fought to protect their right to liberty from abuses by other sectors of society.

## The main labor unions that functioned nationally at the time were:

- 1866 National Labor Union (organized as a political party as well in 1870 as the National Labor Reform Party)
- 1869 Knights of Labor, which favored political action over strikes and was open to all workers skilled and unskilled, women, and African-Americans - This union was famous for the idea of cooperatives in which workers and consumers shared in the ownership and management of the company. By 1880, 135 cooperatives had been established in the US. The Knights of Labor lost popularity after the 1886 Haymarket Square bombing at which anarchists amongst the crowd of 80,000 Chicago workers, marching in favor of an 8-hour work day, turned a peaceful march into violence.

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

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- 1886 American Federation of Labor (led by Samuel Gompers) formed and gained popularity after the Haymarket Square bombing and was only open to skilled labor.
- 1893 Industrial Workers of the World (leader: William - Big Bill - Haywood)
- 1892 Homestead Steel Plant Strike - Andrew Carnegie at his Pittsburgh plant wanted to lower wages. When workers protested, he locked out the workers and tried to bring other laborers in. Violence and deaths resulted.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

## Some of the famous strikes of the era were:

- The Strike of 1877 - This was first large-scale labor unrest in the nation. It resulted from the depression in 1873, which had led to railroads cutting wages. Railroad workers stopped working and prevented the trains from running. In Philadelphia, federal troops were called in, and twenty-six people were killed. Strikes, violence, and sympathy grew nation-wide, with other industries participating, e.g. coal, factories, women, etc... In St. Louis, unions called for a city-wide general strike to get an eight-hour work day and an end to child labor. This strike revealed the great divide between the rich and the working people in the US, and led to a strong dislike for railroads and more public support for striking workers.
- Haymarket Square 1886 (see above).
- 1894 Pullman Strike - In this strike, workers disconnected railroad cars to stop rail service. US troops were sent in by President Cleveland and violence resulted; workers were arrested for disrupting the postal service and thus violating federal law.

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*“Mulberry Street, New York City,” ca. 1900, [Library of Congress](#)*

### I. Introduction

When British author Rudyard Kipling visited Chicago in 1889, he described a city captivated by technology and blinded by greed. He described a rushed and crowded city, a “huge wilderness” with “scores of miles of these terrible streets” and their “hundred thousand of these terrible people.” “The show impressed me with a great horror,” he wrote. “There was no color in the street and no beauty—only a maze of wire ropes overhead and dirty stone flagging under foot.” He took a cab “and the cabman said that these things were the proof of progress.” Kipling visited a “gilded and mirrored” hotel “crammed with people talking about money, and spitting about everywhere.”

He visited extravagant churches and spoke with their congregates. “I listened to people who said that the mere fact of spiking down strips of iron to wood, and getting a steam and iron thing to run along them was progress, that the telephone was progress, and the network of wires overhead was progress. They repeated their statements again and again.” Kipling said American newspapers report “that the snarling together of telegraph-wires, the heaving up of houses, and the making of money is progress.”

Chicago embodied the triumph of American industrialization. Its meatpacking industry typified the sweeping changes occurring in American life. The last decades of the nineteenth century, a new

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era for big business, saw the formation of large corporations, run by trained bureaucrats and salaried managers, doing national and international business. Chicago, for instance, became America's butcher. The Chicago meat processing industry, a cartel of five firms, produced four-fifths of the meat bought by American consumers. Kipling described in intimate detail the Union Stock Yards, the nation's largest meat processing zone, a square-mile just southwest of the city whose pens and slaughterhouses linked the city's vast agricultural hinterland to the nation's dinner tables. "Once having seen them," he concluded, "you will never forget the sight." Like other notable Chicago industries, such as agricultural machinery and steel production, the meatpacking industry was closely tied to urbanization and immigration. In 1850, Chicago had a population of about 30,000. Twenty years later, it had 300,000. Nothing could stop the city's growth. The Great Chicago Fire leveled 3.5 square miles and left a third of its residents homeless in 1871, but the city quickly recovered and resumed its spectacular growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, the city was home to 1.7 million people.

Chicago's explosive growth reflected national trends. In 1870, a quarter of the nation's population lived in towns or cities with populations greater than 2,500. By 1920, a majority did. But if many who flocked to Chicago and other American cities came from rural America, many others emigrated from overseas. Mirroring national immigration patterns, Chicago's newcomers had at first come mostly from Germany,



*Wabash Avenue, Chicago, c1907. Library of Congress, LC-D4-70163.*

the British Isles, and Scandinavia, but, by 1890, Poles, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and others from Southern and Eastern Europe made up a majority of new immigrants. Chicago, like many other American industrial cities, was also an immigrant city. In 1900, nearly 80% of Chicago's population was either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born immigrants.

Kipling visited Chicago just as new industrial modes of production revolutionized the United States. The rise of cities, the evolution of American immigration, the transformation of American labor, the further making of a mass culture, the creation of great concentrated wealth, the growth of vast city slums, the conquest of the West, the emergence of a middle class, the problem of poverty, the triumph of big business, widening inequalities, battles between capital and labor, the final destruction of independent farming, breakthrough technologies, environmental destruction: industrialization created a new America



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## II. Industrialization and Technological Innovation

The railroads created the first great concentrations of capital, spawned the first massive corporations, made the first of the vast fortunes that would define the “Gilded Age,” unleashed labor demands that united thousands of farmers and immigrants, and linked many towns and cities. National railroad mileage tripled in the twenty years after the outbreak of the Civil War, and tripled again over the four decades that followed. Railroads impelled the creation of uniform time zones across the country, gave industrialists access to remote markets, and opened the American west. Railroad companies were the nation’s largest businesses. Their vast national operations demanded the creation of innovative new corporate organization, advanced management techniques, and vast sums of capital. Their huge expenditures spurred countless industries and attracted droves of laborers. And as they crisscrossed the nation, they created a national market, a truly national economy, and, seemingly, a new national culture.

The railroads were not natural creations. Their vast capital requirements required the use of incorporation, a legal innovation that protected shareholders from losses. Enormous amounts of government support followed. Federal, state, and local governments offered unrivaled handouts to create the national rail networks. Lincoln’s Republican Party—which dominated government policy during the Civil War



*Stereoscopic view of the Great Union Stockyards in turn-of-the-century Chicago. The stockyards were the epicenter of the American meat-packing industry for much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The yards were made possible through the joint purchase of over three acres of unusable swamp land by railroad companies, who then turned it into a hugely profitable centralized meatpacking district. In the Great Union Stock Yards [stockyards], Chicago, U.S.A., c. 1890. [Wikimedia](#).*

and Reconstruction—passed legislation granting vast subsidies. Hundreds of millions of acres of land and millions of dollars’ worth of government bonds were freely given to build the great transcontinental railroads and the innumerable trunk lines that quickly annihilated the vast geographic barriers that had so long sheltered American cities from one another.

As railroad construction drove economic development, new means of production spawned new systems of labor. Many wage earners had traditionally seen factory work as a temporary stepping-stone to attaining their own small businesses or farms. After the war, however, new technology and greater mechanization meant fewer and fewer workers could legitimately aspire to economic independence. Stronger and more organized labor unions formed to fight for a growing, more-permanent working class. At the same time, the growing scale of economic enterprises increasingly disconnected owners from

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their employees and day-to-day business operations. To handle their vast new operations, owners turned to managers. Educated bureaucrats swelled the ranks of an emerging middle class.

Industrialization also remade much of American life outside of the workplace. Rapidly growing industrialized cities knit together urban consumers and rural producers into a single, integrated national market. Food production and consumption, for instance, were utterly nationalized. Chicago's Stock Yards seemingly tied it all together. Between 1866 and 1886, ranchers drove a million head of cattle annually overland from Texas ranches to railroad depots in Kansas for shipment, by rail, to Chicago. After traveling through modern "disassembly lines," the animals left the adjoining slaughterhouses as slabs of meat to be packed into refrigerated rail cars and sent to butcher shops across the continent. By 1885, a handful of large-scale industrial meatpackers in Chicago were producing nearly 500 million pounds of "dressed" beef annually. The new scale of industrialized meat production transformed the landscape. Buffalo herds, grasslands, and old-growth forests gave way to cattle, corn, and wheat. Chicago became the Gateway City, a crossroads connecting American agricultural goods, capital markets in New York and London, and consumers from all corners of the United States.

Technological innovation accompanied economic development. For April Fool's Day in 1878, the New



*This print shows the four stages of pork packing in nineteenth-century Cincinnati. This centralization of production made meat-packing an innovative industry, one of great interest to industrialists of all ilks. In fact, this chromo-lithograph was exhibited by the Cincinnati Pork Packers' Association at the International Exposition in Vienna, Austria. "Pork Packing in Cincinnati," 1873. [Wikimedia](#).*

York *Daily Graphic* published a fictitious interview with the celebrated inventor Thomas A. Edison. The piece described the "biggest invention of the age"—a new Edison machine that could create forty different kinds of food and drink out of only air, water, and dirt. "Meat will no longer be killed and vegetables no longer grown, except by savages," Edison promise. The machine would end "famine and pauperism." And all for \$5 or \$6 per machine! The story was a joke, of course, but Edison nevertheless received inquiries from readers wondering when the food machine would be ready for the market. Americans had apparently witnessed such startling technological advances—advances that would have seemed far-fetched mere years earlier—that the Edison food machine seemed entirely plausible.

In September 1878, Edison announced a new and



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ambitious line of research and development—electric power and lighting. The scientific principles behind dynamos and electric motors—the conversion of mechanical energy to electrical power, and vice versa—were long known, but Edison applied the age’s bureaucratic and commercial ethos to the problem. Far from a lone inventor gripped by inspiration toiling in isolation, Edison advanced the model of commercially minded management of research and development. Edison folded his two identities, business manager and inventor, together. He called his Menlo Park research laboratory an “invention factory” and promised to turn out “a minor invention every ten days and a big thing every six months or so.” He brought his fully equipped Menlo Park research laboratory and the skilled machinists and scientists he employed to bear on the problem of building an electric power system—and commercializing it.

By late fall 1879, Edison exhibited his system of power generation and electrical light for reporters and investors. Then he scaled up production. He sold generators to businesses. By the middle of 1883, Edison had overseen construction of 330 plants powering over 60,000 lamps in factories, offices, printing houses, hotels, and theaters around the world. He worked on municipal officials to build central power stations and run power lines. New York’s Pearl Street central station opened in September 1882 and powered a square-mile of downtown Manhattan. Electricity revolutionized the world. It not only



*The photograph on the left, taken in Mathew Brady’s Washington, DC, studio in April 1878, shows inventor Thomas Edison with his phonograph (2nd model). Edison was one of the most important and influential American inventors, giving us technology like the phonograph and motion picture camera (seen in the right photograph). Thomas Handy, “Edison, Thomas,” 1877. [Library of Congress](#).*

illuminated the night, it powered the second industrial revolution. Factories could operate anywhere at any hour. Electric rail cars allowed for cities to build out and electric elevators allowed for them to build up.

Economic advances, technological innovation, social and cultural evolution, demographic transformations: the United States was a nation transformed. Industry boosted productivity, railroads connected the nation, more and more Americans labored for wages, new

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bureaucratic occupations created a vast “white collar” middle class, and unprecedented fortunes rewarded the owners of capital. These revolutionary changes, of course, would not occur without conflict or consequence (see chapter 18), but they demonstrated the profound transformations remaking the nation. Change was not confined to economics alone. Change gripped the lives of everyday Americans and fundamentally reshaped American culture.

### III. Immigration and Urbanization

Industry pulled ever more Americans into cities. Manufacturing needed the labor pool and the infrastructure. America’s urban population increased seven fold in the half-century after the Civil War. Soon the United States had more large cities than any country in the world. The 1920 U.S. census revealed that, for the first time, a majority of Americans lived in urban areas. Much of that urban growth came from the millions of immigrants pouring into the nation. Between 1870 and 1920, over 25 million immigrants arrived in the United States.

By the turn of the twentieth century, new immigrant groups such as Italians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews made up a larger percentages of arrivals than the Irish and Germans. The specific reasons that immigrants left their particular countries and the reasons they came to the United States (what historians call “push” and “pull” factors) varied. For



*Along with a host of inventions central to American life, Edison also came up with the principles of mass production and the first industrial research laboratory. A recreation of his Menlo Park Laboratory, the site of the invention of the light bulb, exists in Greenfield Village at The Henry Ford in Dearborn, Michigan, shown in the photograph on the right. His work was vital in the development of the modern industrialized world, including the development of a system of electric-power production and distribution to households, businesses, and factories. Menlo Park Laboratory Photograph, 2010. [Wikimedia](#).*

example, a young husband and wife living in Sweden in the 1880s and unable to purchase farmland might read an advertisement for inexpensive land in the American Midwest and immigrate to the United States to begin a new life. A young Italian man might simply hope to labor in a steel factory long enough to save up enough money to return home and purchase land for a family. A Russian Jewish family, persecuted in European pogroms, might look to the United States as a sanctuary. Or perhaps a Japanese migrant might hear of fertile farming land on the West Coast and choose to sail for California. But if many factors pushed people away from their home countries, by far the most important factor drawing immigrants was economics. Immigrants came to the United States looking for work.

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Factories in New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis attracted large numbers of immigrants. By 1890, immigrants and their children accounted for roughly 60 percent of the population in most large northern cities (and could reach as high as 80 or 90 percent). Many immigrants, especially from Italy and the Balkans, always intended to return home. But what about those who stayed? Did the new arrivals assimilate together in the American “melting pot”—becoming just like those already in the United States—or did they retain—and sometimes even strengthen—their traditional ethnic identities? The answer lies somewhere in between. Immigrants from specific countries—and often even specific communities—often clustered together in ethnic neighborhoods. They formed vibrant organizations and societies, such as Italian workmen’s clubs, Eastern European Jewish mutual-aid societies, and Polish Catholic Churches, to ease the transition to their new American home. Immigrant communities published newspapers in dozens of languages and purchased spaces to maintain their arts, languages, and traditions alive. And from these foundations they facilitated even more immigration: after staking out a claim to some corner of American life, they wrote home and encouraged others to follow them (historians call this “chain migration”).

Many city’s politics adapted to immigrant populations. The infamous urban political “machines” often operated as a kind of mutual aid society. New



*Detroit, Michigan, began to prosper as an industrial city and major transportation hub by the mid to late nineteenth century. It would continue to grow throughout the early to mid-twentieth century as Henry Ford and others pioneered the automobile industry and made Detroit the automobile capital of the world – hence its nickname “Motor City.” Calvert Lith. Co., “Birds eye view—showing about three miles square—of the central portion of the city of Detroit, Michigan,” 1889. [Wikimedia](#).*

York City’s Democratic Party machine, popularly known as Tammany Hall, drew the greatest ire from critics and seemed to embody all of the worst of city machines, but it also responded to immigrant needs. In 1903, journalist William Riordon published a book, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, which chronicled the activities of ward heeler George Washington Plunkitt. Plunkitt elaborately explained to Riordon the difference between “honest graft” and “dishonest graft:” “I made my pile in politics, but, at the same time, I served the organization and got more big improvements for New York City than any other livin’ man.” While exposing corruption, Riordon also revealed the hard work Plunkitt undertook on behalf of his largely immigrant constituency. On a typical day, Riordon wrote, Plunkitt was awakened at 2:00 AM to bail out a saloon-keeper who stayed open too late, was awakened again at 6:00 AM because of a fire

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in the neighborhood and spent time finding lodgings for the families displaced by the fire, and, after spending the rest of the morning in court to secure the release of several of his constituents, found jobs for four unemployed men, attended an Italian funeral, visited a church social, and dropped in on a Jewish wedding. He returned home at midnight.

Tammany Hall's corruption, especially under the reign of William "Boss" Tweed, was legendary, but the public works projects that funded Tammany Hall's graft also provided essential infrastructure and public services for the city's rapidly expanding population. Water, sewer, and gas lines; schools, hospitals, civic buildings, and museums; police and fire departments; roads, parks (notably Central Park), and bridges (notably the Brooklyn Bridge): all could, in whole or in part, be credited to Tammany's reign. Still, machine politics could never be enough. As the urban population exploded, many immigrants found themselves trapped in crowded, crime-ridden slums. Americans would eventually take notice of this "urban crisis" and propose municipal reforms, but Americans also grew concerned about the declining quality of life in rural areas.

While cities boomed, rural worlds languished. Some Americans scoffed at rural backwardness and reveled in the countryside's decay, but many romanticized the countryside, celebrated rural life, and wondered what had been lost in the cities. Sociologist Kenyon Butterfield, concerned by the sprawling nature of



*As the country's busiest immigrant inspection station from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth century, Ellis Island operated a massive medical service through the Ellis Island Immigrant Hospital (seen in the photograph). Symbols of various diseases (physical and mental) were placed on immigrants' clothing using chalk, and many were able to enter the country only through wiping off or concealing the chalk marks. Photograph of the Immigrant Hospital at Ellis Island, 1913. [Wikimedia](#).*

industrial cities and suburbs, regretted the eroding social position of rural citizens and farmers:

"agriculture does not hold the same relative rank among our industries that it did in former years." Butterfield saw "the farm problem" as part of "the whole question of democratic civilization." He and many others thought the rise of the cities and the fall of the countryside threatened traditional American values. Many proposed conservation. Liberty Hyde Bailey, a botanist and rural scholar selected by Theodore Roosevelt to chair a federal Commission on Country Life in 1907, believed that rural places and industrial cities were linked: "every agricultural question is a city question."

Many longed for a middle path between the cities and the country. New suburban communities on the out-



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skirts of American cities defined themselves in opposition to urban crowding. Americans contemplated the complicated relationships between rural places, suburban living, and urban spaces. Los Angeles became a model for the suburban development of rural places. Dana Barlett, a social reformer in Los Angeles, noted that the city, stretching across dozens of small towns, was “a better city” because of its residential identity as a “city of homes.” This language was seized upon by many suburbs who hoped to avoid both urban sprawl and rural decay. In one of these small towns on the outskirts of Los Angeles, Glendora, local leaders were “loath as anyone to see it become cosmopolitan.” Instead, in order to have Glendora “grow along the lines necessary to have it remain an enjoyable city of homes,” they needed to “bestir ourselves to direct its growth” by encouraging not industry or agriculture but residential development.

### IV. The New South and the Problem of Race

“There was a South of slavery and secession,” *Atlanta Constitution* editor Henry Grady proclaimed in an 1886 speech in New York. “That South is dead.” Grady captured the sentiment of many white southern business and political leaders who imagined a New South that could turn its back to the past by embracing industrialization and diversified agriculture. He promoted the region’s economic possibilities and mutual future prosperity through an alliance of north-



*Tammany Hall was at its political height in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, around the time this photograph of the building at Tammany Hall and 14th St. West was taken. It practically controlled Democratic Party nominations and political patronage in New York City from the 1850s through the 1930s. Irving Underhill (photographer), "c. 1914. Tammany Hall & 14th St. West," [Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/90713159/), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/90713159/>. 1913. [Wikimedia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tammany_Hall.jpg).*

ern capital and southern labor. Grady and other New South boosters hoped to shape the region’s economy in the North’s image. They wanted industry and they wanted infrastructure. But the past could not be escaped. Economically and socially, the “New South” would still be much like the old.

A “New South” seemed an obvious need. The Confederacy’s failed insurrection wreaked havoc on the southern economy and crippled southern prestige. Property was destroyed. Lives were lost. Political power vanished. And four million enslaved Americans—representing the wealth and power of the antebellum white South—threw off their chains and walked proudly forward into freedom.

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Emancipation unsettled the southern social order. When Reconstruction regimes attempted to grant freedpeople full citizenship rights, anxious whites struck back. From their fear, anger, and resentment they lashed out, not only in organized terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, but in political corruption, economic exploitation, and violent intimidation. White Southerners took back control of state and local governments and used their reclaimed power to disenfranchise African Americans and pass “Jim Crow” laws segregating schools, transportation, employment, and various public and private facilities. The reestablishment of white supremacy after the “redemption” of the South from Reconstruction gave lie to the “New” South. Perhaps nothing harkened so forcefully back to the barbaric southern past than the wave of lynchings—the extralegal murder of individuals by vigilantes—that washed across the South after Reconstruction. Whether for actual crimes or fabricated crimes or for no crimes at all, white mobs murdered roughly five thousand African Americans between the 1880s and the 1950s.

Lynching was not just murder, it was a ritual rich with symbolism. Victims were not simply hanged, they were mutilated, burned alive, and shot. Lynchings could become carnivals, public spectacles attended by thousands of eager spectators. Rail lines ran special cars to accommodate the rush of participants. Vendors sold goods and keepsakes. Perpetrators



*The ambitions of Atlanta, seen in the construction of grand buildings like the Kimball House Hotel, reflect the larger regional aspirations to thrive in this so-called era of the “New South.” Photograph of the second Kimball House scanned from an 1890 book. [Wikimedia](#).*

posed for photos and collected mementos. And it was increasingly common. One notorious example occurred in Georgia in 1899. Accused of killing his white employer and raping the man’s wife, Sam Hose was captured by a mob and taken to the town of Newnan. Word of the impending lynching quickly spread, and specially chartered passenger trains brought some 4,000 visitors from Atlanta to witness the gruesome affair. Members of the mob tortured Hose for about an hour. They sliced off pieces of his body as he screamed in agony. Then they poured a can of kerosene over his body and burned him alive.

At the barbaric height of southern lynching, in the last years of the nineteenth century, southerners lynched two to three African Americans every week. In general, lynchings were most frequent in the Cotton Belt of the Lower South, where southern blacks were most numerous and where the majority worked as



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tenant farmers and field hands on the cotton farms of white land owners. The states of Mississippi and Georgia had the greatest number of recorded lynchings: from 1880 to 1930, Mississippi lynch mobs killed over five hundred African Americans; Georgia mobs murdered more than four hundred.

Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a number of prominent southerners openly supported lynching, arguing that it was a necessary evil to punish black rapists and deter others. In the late 1890s, Georgia newspaper columnist and noted women's rights activist Rebecca Latimer Felton—who would later become the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate—endorsed such extrajudicial killings. She said, “If it takes lynching to protect women’s dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week.” When opponents argued that lynching violated victims’ constitutional right, South Carolina Governor Coleman Blease angrily responded, “Whenever the Constitution comes between me and the virtue of the white women of South Carolina, I say to hell with the Constitution.”

Black activists and white allies worked to outlaw lynching. Ida B. Wells, an African American woman born in the last years of slavery and a pioneering anti-lynching advocate, lost three friends to a lynch mob in Memphis, Tennessee in 1892. That year, Wells published *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, a groundbreaking work that documented the South’s lynching culture and exposed the myth



*This photograph shows the lynching of Laura and Lawrence Nelson on May 25, 1911 in Okemah, Oklahoma. One of thousands of lynchings throughout the South in the late nineteenth and century twentieth centuries, this particular case of the lynching of a mother and son garnered national attention. In response, the local white newspaper in Okemah simply wrote, “while the general sentiment is adverse to the method, it is generally thought that the negroes got what would have been due them under due process of law.” (The Okemah Ledger, May 4, 1911) George H. Farnum (photographer), Photograph, May 25, 1911. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lynching\\_of\\_Laura\\_Nelson\\_and\\_her\\_son\\_2.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lynching_of_Laura_Nelson_and_her_son_2.jpg).*

of the black rapist. The Tuskegee Institute and the NAACP both compiled and publicized lists of every reported lynching in the United States, and the American Society of Women for the Prevention of Lynching encouraged white southern women to speak up against the violence so often perpetrated in their name. In 1918, Representative Leonidas Dyer of Missouri introduced federal anti-lynching legislation that would have made local counties where lynchings took place legally liable for such killings. Throughout the early 1920s, the Dyer Bill was the subject of heated political debate but, fiercely opposed by southern congressmen and unable to win enough northern champions, the proposed bill was never enacted.

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Lynching was only the violent worst of the southern racial world. Discrimination in employment and housing and the legal segregation of public and private life reflected the rise of a new Jim Crow South. So-called Jim Crow laws legalized what custom had long dictated. Southern states and municipalities began proscribing racial segregation in public places and private lives. Separate coach laws were some of the first such laws to appear, beginning in Tennessee in the 1880s. Soon, schools, stores, theaters, restaurants, bathrooms, and nearly every other part of public life were segregated. So too were social lives. The sin of racial mixing, critics said, had to be heavily guarded against. Marriage laws regulated against interracial couples and white men, ever anxious of relationships between black men and white women, passed miscegenation laws and justified lynching as an appropriate extra-legal tool to police the racial divide.

In politics, *de facto* limitations of black voting had suppressed black voters since Reconstruction. Whites stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated black voters with physical and economic threats. And then, from roughly 1890-1908, southern states implemented *de jure*, or legal, disfranchisement. They passed laws requiring voters to pass literacy tests (which could be judged arbitrarily) and pay poll taxes (which hit poor whites and poor blacks alike), effectively denying black men the franchise that was supposed to have been guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment. Those responsible for such laws posed as reformers and justified voting restrictions as for the public good, a

way to clean up politics by purging corrupt African Americans from the voting rolls.

With white supremacy secured, prominent white southerners looked outward for support. New South boosters hoped to confront post-Reconstruction uncertainties by rebuilding the South's economy and convincing the nation that the South could be more than an economically backward, race-obsessed backwater. And as they did, they began to retell the history of the recent past. A kind of civic religion known as the "Lost Cause" glorified the Confederacy and romanticized the Old South. White southerners looked forward while simultaneously hearkening back to an imagined past inhabited by contented and loyal slaves, benevolent and generous masters, chivalric and honorable men, and pure and faithful southern belles. Secession, they said, had little to do with the institution of slavery, and soldiers fought only for home and honor, not the continued ownership of human beings. The New South, then, would be built physically with new technologies, new investments, and new industries, but undergirded by political and social custom.

Henry Grady might have declared the Confederate South dead, but its memory pervaded the thoughts and actions of white southerners. Lost Cause champions overtook the South. Women's groups, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, joined with Confederate veterans to preserve a pro-Confederate past. They built Confederate monuments and celebrating Confederate veterans on Memorial

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Day. Across the South, towns erected statues of General Robert E. Lee and other Confederate figures. By the turn of the twentieth century, the idealized Lost Cause past was entrenched not only in the South but across the country. In 1905, for instance, North Carolinian Thomas F. Dixon published a novel, *The Clansman*, which depicted the Ku Klux Klan as heroic defenders of the South against the corruption of African American and northern “carpetbag” misrule during Reconstruction. In 1915, acclaimed film director David W. Griffith adapted Dixon’s novel into the groundbreaking, blockbuster film, *Birth of a Nation*. (The film almost singlehandedly rejuvenated the Ku Klux Klan.) The romanticized version of the antebellum South and the distorted version of Reconstruction dominated popular imagination.

While Lost Cause defenders mythologized their past, New South boosters struggled to wrench the South into the modern world. The railroads became their focus. The region had lagged behind the North in the railroad building boom of the mid-nineteenth century and postwar expansion facilitated connections between the most rural segments of the population with the region’s rising urban areas. Boosters campaigned for the construction new hard-surfaced roads as well, arguing that improved roads would further increase the flow of goods and people and entice northern businesses to relocate to the region. The rising popularity of the automobile after the turn of the century only increased pressure for the construction of reliable roads between cities, towns, county seats, and the vast farmlands of the South.

Along with new transportation networks, New South boosters continued to promote industrial growth. The region witnessed the rise of various manufacturing industries, predominately textiles, tobacco, furniture, and steel. While agriculture—cotton in particular—remained the mainstay of the region’s economy, these new industries provided new wealth for owners, new investments for the region, and new opportunities for the exploding number of landless farmers to finally flee the land. Industries offered low-paying jobs but also opportunity for those rural poor who could no longer sustain themselves through subsistence farming. Men, women, and children all moved into wage work. At the turn of the twentieth century, nearly one-fourth of southern mill workers were children aged six to sixteen.

In most cases, as in most aspects of life in the New South, new factory jobs were racially segregated. Better-paying jobs were reserved for whites, while the most dangerous, labor-intensive, dirtiest, and lowest-paying positions were relegated to African Americans. African American women, shut out of most industries, found employment most often as domestic help for white families. As poor as white southern mill workers were, southern blacks were poorer, and many mill workers could afford to pay for domestic help in caring for young children, cleaning houses, doing laundry, cooking meals, and then leaving. Mill villages that grew up alongside factories were whites-only, and African American families were pushed to the outer perimeter of the settlements.

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That a “New South” emerged in the decades between Reconstruction and World War I is debatable. If measured by industrial output and railroad construction, the New South was a reality, if, relative the rest of the nation, a limited one. If measured in terms of racial discrimination, however, the New South looked much like the Old. Boosters such as Henry Grady said the South was done with racial questions, but lynching and segregation and the institutionalization of Jim Crow exposed the South’s lingering racial obsessions. Meanwhile, most southerners still toiled in agriculture and still lived in poverty. Industrial development and expanding infrastructure, rather than recreating the South, coexisted easily with white supremacy and an impoverished agricultural economy. The trains came, factories were built, and capital was invested, but the region remained mired in poverty and racial apartheid. Much of the “New South,” then, was anything but new.

## V. Gender, Religion, and Culture

In 1905, Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller donated \$100,000 (about \$2.5 million today) to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Rockefeller was the richest man in America but also one of the most hated and mistrusted. Even admirers conceded that he achieved his wealth through often illegal and usually immoral business



*Taken a few years after the publication of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” this portrait photograph shows activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s feminine poise and respectability even as she sought massive change for women’s place in society. An outspoken supporter of women’s rights, Gilman’s works challenged the supposedly “natural” inferiority of women. Her short stories, novels, and poetry have been an inspiration to feminists for over a century. Photograph, 1895. Wikimedia, been due them under due process of law.” (The Okemah Ledger, May 4, 1911) George H. Farnum (photographer), Photograph, May 25, 1911. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lynching\\_of\\_Laura\\_Nelson\\_and\\_her\\_son\\_2.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lynching_of_Laura_Nelson_and_her_son_2.jpg).*

practices. Journalist Ida Tarbell had made waves describing Standard Oil’s long-standing ruthlessness and predilections for political corruption. Clergymen, led by reformer Washington Gladden, fiercely protested the donation. A decade earlier, Gladden had asked of such donations, “Is this clean money? Can any man, can any institution, knowing its origin, touch it without being defiled?” Gladden said, “In the cool brutality with which properties are wrecked, securities destroyed, and people by the hundreds robbed of their little all to build up the fortunes of the multi-millionaires, we have an appalling revelation of the kind of monster that a human being may become.”

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Despite widespread criticism, the American Board accepted Rockefeller's donation. Board President Samuel Capen did not defend Rockefeller, arguing the gift was charitable and the Board could not assess the origin of every donation, but the dispute shook Capen. Was a corporate background incompatible with a religious organization? The "tainted money debate" reflected questions about the proper relationship between religion and capitalism. With rising income inequality, would religious groups be forced to support either the elite or the disempowered? What was moral in the new industrial United States? And what obligations did wealth bring? Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie wrote in an 1889 article, "The Gospel of Wealth," that "the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth" was the moral obligation of the rich to give to charity. Farmer and labor organizers, meanwhile, argued that God had blessed the weak and that new Gilded Age fortunes and corporate management were inherently immoral. As time passed, American churches increasingly adapted themselves to the new industrial order. Even Gladden came to accept Rockefeller's donation and businessmen, such as the Baptist John D. Rockefeller, increasingly touted the morality of business. Meanwhile, as many churches wondered about the compatibility of large fortunes with Christian values, others were concerned for the fate of traditional American masculinity.

The economic and social changes of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—including increased urbanization, immigration, advancements in science and technology, patterns of consumption and the new availability of goods, and new awareness of economic, racial, and gender inequalities—challenged traditional gender norms. At the same time, urban spaces and shifting cultural and social values presented unprecedented opportunities to challenge traditional gender and sexual norms. Many women, carrying on a campaign that stretched long into the past, vied for equal rights. They became activists: they targeted municipal reforms, launched labor rights campaigns, and, above all, bolstered the suffrage movement.

Urbanization and immigration fueled anxieties that old social mores were being subverted and that old forms of social and moral policing were increasingly inadequate. The anonymity of urban spaces presented an opportunity in particular for female sexuality and for male and female sexual experimentation along a spectrum of orientations and gender identities. Anxiety over female sexuality reflected generational tensions and differences, as well as racial and class ones. As young women pushed back against social mores through pre-marital sexual exploration and expression, social welfare experts and moral reformers labeled such girls feeble-minded, believing even that such unfeminine behavior could be symptomatic of clinical insanity



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rather than free-willed expression. Generational differences exacerbated the social, and even familial, tensions provoked by shifting gender norms. Youths challenged the norms of their parents' generations by donning new fashions and enjoying the delights of the city. Women's fashion loosed its physical constraints: corsets relaxed and hemlines rose. The newfound physical freedom enabled by looser dress was also mimicked in the pursuit of other freedoms.

While many women worked to liberate themselves, many, sometimes simultaneously, worked to uplift others. Women's work against alcohol propelled temperance into one of the foremost moral reforms of the period. Middle-class, typically Protestant women based their assault on alcohol on the basis of their feminine virtue, Christian sentiment, and their protective role in the family and home. Others, like Jane Addams and settlement house workers, sought to impart a middle-class education on immigrant and working class women through the establishment of settlement homes. Other reformers touted a "scientific motherhood": the new science of hygiene was deployed as a method of both social uplift and moralizing, particularly of working class and immigrant women.

Women vocalized new discontents through literature. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," attacked the "naturalness" of feminine domesticity and critiqued Victorian psychological remedies administered to women, such as the "rest

cure." Kate Chopin's *The Great Awakening*, set in the American South, likewise criticized the domestic and familial role ascribed to women by society, and gave expression to feelings of malaise, desperation, and desire. Such literature directly challenged the status quo of the Victorian era's constructions of femininity and feminine virtue, as well as established feminine roles.

While many men worried about female activism, they worried too about their own masculinity. To anxious observers, industrial capitalism was withering American manhood. Rather than working on farms and in factories, where young men formed physical muscle and spiritual grit, new generations of workers labored behind desks, wore white collars, and, in the words of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, appeared "black-coated, stiff-jointed, soft-muscled, [and] paste complexioned." Neurologist George Beard even coined a medical term, "neurasthenia," for a new emasculated condition that marked by depression, indigestion, hypochondria, and extreme nervousness. The philosopher William James called it "Americanitis." Academics increasingly warned that America had become a nation of emasculated men.

Churches too worried about feminization. Women had always comprised a clear majority of church memberships in the United States, but now the theologian Washington Gladden said, "A preponderance of female influence in the



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Church or anywhere else in society is unnatural and injurious.” Many feared that the feminized church had feminized Christ Himself. Rather than a rough-hewn carpenter, Jesus had been made “mushy” and “sweetly effeminate,” in the words of Walter Rauschenbusch. Advocates of a so-called “muscular Christianity” sought to stiffen young men’s backbones by putting them back in touch with their primal manliness. Pulling from contemporary developmental theory, they believed that young men ought to evolve as civilization evolved, advancing from primitive nature-dwelling to modern industrial enlightenment. To facilitate “primitive” encounters with nature, muscular Christians founded summer camps and outdoor boys clubs like the Woodcraft Indians, the Sons of Daniel Boone, and the Boy Brigades—all precursors of the Boy Scouts. Other champions of muscular Christianity, such as the newly formed Young Men’s Christian Association, built gymnasiums, often attached to churches, where youths could strengthen their bodies as well as their spirits. It was a YMCA leader that coined the term “body-building,” and others that invented the sports of basketball and volleyball.

Muscular Christianity, though, was about even more than building strong bodies and minds. Many advocates also ardently championed Western imperialism, cheering on attempts to civilize non-Western peoples. Gilded Age men were encouraged to embrace a particular vision of masculinity connected intimately with the rising tides of nationalism,



*These posters for Wm. H. West's Big Minstrel Jubilee advertised a vaudeville show of comedy and acrobatics performed by white actors in blackface. Minstrelsy had been a popular form of entertainment for white audiences since the 1840s, but blackface took on a new life in the early twentieth century as racism intensified in both the North and South. Embodying characteristics that by that time had become associated with blackness, including joyful ignorance, laziness, and over-pronounced facial features, blackface minstrelsy circulated racist images and attitudes around the world. The Strobridge Lithographing Company, "Wm. H. West's Big Minstrel Jubilee," 1900. [Wikimedia](#).*

militarism, and imperialism. Contemporary ideals of American masculinity at the turn of the century developed in concert with the United States’ imperial and militaristic endeavors in the West and abroad. During the Spanish American War in 1898, Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders would embody the idealized image of the tall, strong, virile, and fit American man that simultaneously epitomized the ideals of power that informed the United States’ imperial agenda. Roosevelt and others like him believed a reinvigorated masculinity would preserve the American race’s superiority against foreign foes and the effeminizing effects of over-civilization.

But while many fretted about traditional American life, others lost themselves in new forms of mass

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culture. Vaudeville signaled new cultural worlds. A unique variety of popular entertainments, these traveling circuit shows first appeared during the Civil War and peaked between 1880 and 1920. Vaudeville shows featured comedians, musicians, actors, jugglers and other talents that could captivate an audience. Unlike earlier rowdy acts meant for a male audience that included alcohol, vaudeville was considered family friendly, “polite” entertainment, though the acts involved offensive ethnic and racial caricatures of African Americans and recent immigrants. Vaudeville performances were often small and quirky, though venues such as the renowned Palace Theatre in New York City signaled true stardom for many performers. Popular entertainers such as silent film star Charlie Chaplin and magician Harry Houdini made names for themselves in the vaudeville circuit. But if live entertainment still captivated audiences, others looked to entirely new technologies.

By the turn of the century, two technologies pioneered by Edison—the phonograph and motion pictures—stood ready to revolutionize leisure and help create the mass entertainment culture of the twentieth century. The phonograph was the first reliable device capable of recording and reproducing sound. But it was more than that. The phonograph could create multiple copies of recordings, sparking a great expansion of the market for popular music. Although the phonograph was a technical success, Edison at first had trouble developing commercial applications for it. He thought it might be used for

dictation, recording audio letters, preserving speeches and dying words of great men, producing talking clocks or teaching elocution. He did not anticipate that its greatest use would be in the field of mass entertainment, but Edison’s sales agents soon reported that many phonographs were being used for just that, especially in so-called phonograph parlors, where customers could pay a nickel to hear a piece of music. By the turn of the century, Americans were purchasing phonographs for home use. Entertainment became the phonograph’s major market.

Inspired by the success of the phonograph as an entertainment device, Edison decided in 1888 to develop “an instrument which does for the Eye what the phonograph does for the Ear.” In 1888, he patented the concept of motion pictures. In 1889, he innovated the rolling of film. By 1891, he was exhibiting a motion-picture camera (a “kinetograph”) and a viewer (a “kinetoscope”). By 1894, the Edison Company had produced about 75 films suitable for sale and viewing. They could be viewed through a small eyepiece in an arcade or parlor. They were short, typically about three minutes long. Many of the early films depicted athletic feats and competitions. One 1894 film, for example, showed a six-round boxing match. The catalog description gave a sense of the appeal it had for male viewers: “Full of hard fighting, clever hits, punches, leads, dodges, body blows and some slugging.” Other early kinetoscope subjects included Indian dances, nature and outdoor scenes, recreations of historical events, and humorous skits. By 1896, the “Edison Vi-

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tascope” could project film, shifting audiences away from arcades and pulling them into theaters. Edison’s film catalog meanwhile grew in sophistication. He sent filmmakers to distant and exotic locales like Japan and China. Long form fictional films created a demand for “movie stars,” such as the glamorous Mary Pickford, swashbuckling Douglas Fairbanks, and acrobatic comedian Buster Keaton, who began to appear in the popular imagination beginning around 1910. Alongside professional boxing and baseball, the film industry was creating the modern culture of celebrity that would characterize twentieth-century mass entertainment.

## VI. Conclusion

After enduring four bloody years of warfare and a strained, decade-long effort to Reconstruct the defeated South, the United States abandoned itself to industrial development. Businesses expanded in scale and scope. The nature of labor shifted. A middle class rose. Wealth concentrated. Immigrants crowded into the cities, which grew upward and outward. The Jim Crow South stripped away the vestiges of Reconstruction and New South boosters papered over the scars. Industrialists appealed to people’s profits. Evangelists appealed to people’s morals. Consumers lost themselves in new goods and new technologies. Women emerging into new urban spaces embraced new social possibilities. In all of its many facets, by the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had been radically transformed. And the transformations continued



*Designers of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago used a Neoclassical architectural style to build what was known as The White City. The integrated design of buildings, walkways, and landscapes was extremely influential in the burgeoning City Beautiful movement. The Fair itself was a huge success, bringing more than 27 million people to Chicago and helping to establish the ideology of American exceptionalism. Photograph of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. [Wikimedia](#).*

to ripple outward into the West and overseas, and inward into radical protest and progressive reforms. For Americans at the twilight of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth, a bold new world loomed.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

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*A Maryland National Guard unit fires upon strikers during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Harper's Weekly, via [Wikimedia](#).*

## I. Introduction

The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 heralded a new era of labor conflict in the United States. That year, mired in the stagnant economy that followed the bursting of the railroads' financial bubble in 1873, rail lines slashed workers' wages (even, workers complained, as they reaped enormous government subsidies and paid shareholders lucrative stock dividends). Workers struck from Baltimore to St. Louis, shutting down railroad traffic—the nation's economic lifeblood—across the country.

Panicked business leaders and friendly political officials reacted quickly. When local police forces were unwilling or incapable of suppressing the strikes, governors called out state militias to break them and restore rail service. Many strikers

destroyed rail property rather than allow militias to reopen the rails. The protests approached a class war. The governor of Maryland deployed the state's militia. In Baltimore the militia fired into a crowd of striking workers, killing eleven and wounding many more. Strikes convulsed towns and cities across Pennsylvania. The head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Thomas Andrew Scott, suggested that, if workers were unhappy with their wages, they should be given "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread." Law enforcement in Pittsburgh refused to put down the protests, so the governor called out the state militia, who killed twenty strikers with bayonets and rifle fire. A month of chaos erupted. Strikers set fire to the city, destroying dozens of buildings, over a hundred engines, and over a thousand cars. In Reading, strikers destroyed rail property and an angry crowd bombarded militiamen



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with rocks and bottles. The militia fired into the crowd, killing ten. A general strike erupted in St. Louis, and strikers seized rail depots and declared for the eight-hour day and the abolition of child labor. Federal troops and vigilantes fought their way into the depot, killing eighteen and breaking the strike. Rail lines were shut down all across neighboring Illinois, where coal miners struck in sympathy, tens of thousands gathered to protest under the aegis of the Workingmen's Party, and twenty protesters were killed in Chicago by special police and militiamen.

Courts, police, and state militias suppressed the strikes, but it was federal troops that finally defeated them. When Pennsylvania militiamen were unable to contain the strikes, federal troops stepped in. When militia in West Virginia refused to break the strike, federal troops broke it instead. On the orders of the President, American soldiers were deployed all across northern rail lines. Soldiers moved from town to town, suppressing protests and reopening rail lines. Six weeks after it had begun, the strike had been crushed.

Nearly 100 Americans died in "The Great Upheaval." Workers destroyed nearly \$40 million worth of property. The strike galvanized the country. It convinced laborers of the need for institutionalized unions, persuaded businesses of the need for even greater political influence and government aid, and foretold a half-century of labor conflict in the United States.

## II. The March of Capital

Growing labor unrest accompanied industrialization. The greatest strikes first hit the railroads only because no other industry had so effectively marshaled together capital, government support, and bureaucratic management. Many workers perceived their new powerlessness in the coming industrial order. Skills mattered less and less in an industrialized, mass-producing economy, and their strength as individuals seemed ever smaller and more insignificant when companies grew in size and power and managers grew flush with wealth and influence. Long hours, dangerous working conditions, and the difficulty of supporting a family on meager and unpredictable wages compelled armies of labor to organize and battle against the power of capital.

The post-Civil War era saw revolutions in American industry. Technological innovations and national investments slashed the costs of production and distribution. New administrative frameworks sustained the weight of vast firms. National credit agencies eased the uncertainties surrounding rapid movement of capital between investors, manufacturers, and retailers. Plummeting transportation and communication costs opened new national media, which advertising agencies used to nationalize various products.

By the turn of the century, corporate leaders and wealthy industrialists embraced the new principles

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of “scientific management,” or “Taylorism,” after its noted proponent, Frederick Taylor. The precision of steel parts, the harnessing of electricity, the innovations of machine tools, and the mass markets wrought by the railroads offered new avenues for efficiency. To match the demands of the machine age, Taylor said, firms needed a scientific organization of production. He urged all manufacturers to increase efficiency by subdividing tasks. Rather than having thirty mechanics individually making thirty machines, for instance, a manufacturer could assign thirty laborers to perform thirty distinct tasks. Such a shift would not only make workers as interchangeable as the parts they were using, it would also dramatically speed up the process of production. If managed by trained experts, specific tasks could be done quicker and more efficiently. Taylorism increased the scale and scope of manufacturing and allowed for the flowering of mass production. Building upon the use of interchangeable parts in Civil War Era weapons manufacturing, American firms advanced mass production techniques and technologies. Singer sewing machines, Chicago packers’ “disassembly” lines, McCormick grain reapers, Duke cigarette rollers: all realized unprecedented efficiencies and achieved unheard-of levels of production that propelled their companies into the forefront of American business. Henry Ford made the assembly line famous, allowing the production of automobiles to skyrocket as their cost plummeted, but various American firms had been paving the way for decades.



*John Pierpont Morgan with two friends, ca.1907. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-92327*

Cyrus McCormick had overseen the construction of mechanical reapers (used for harvesting wheat) for decades. He had relied upon skilled blacksmiths, skilled machinists, and skilled woodworkers to handcraft horse-drawn machines. But production was slow and the machines were expensive. The reapers still enabled massive efficiency gains in grain farming, but their high cost and slow production times put them out of reach of most American wheat farmers. But then, in 1880, McCormick hired a production manager who had overseen the manufacturing of Colt firearms to transform his system of production. The Chicago plant introduced new jigs, steel gauges, and pattern machines that could make precise duplicates of new, interchangeable parts. The company had produced 21,000 machines in 1880. It made twice as many in 1885, and by 1889, less than a decade later, it was producing over 100,000 a year.

Industrialization and mass production pushed the United States into the forefront of the world. The



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American economy had lagged behind Britain, Germany, and France as recently as the 1860s, but by 1900 the United States was the world's leading manufacturing nation. Thirteen years later, by 1913, the United States produced one-third of the world's industrial output—more than Britain, France, and Germany combined.

Firms such as McCormick's realized massive economies of scale: after accounting for their initial massive investments in machines and marketing, each additional product lost the company relatively little in production costs. The bigger the production, then, the bigger the profits. New industrial companies therefore hungered for markets to keep their high-volume production facilities operating. Retailers and advertisers sustained the massive markets needed for mass production and corporate bureaucracies meanwhile allowed for the management of giant new firms. A new class of managers—comprising what one prominent economic historian called the “visible hand”—operated between the worlds of workers and owners and ensured the efficient operation and administration of mass production and mass distribution. Even more important to the growth and maintenance of these new companies, however, were the legal creations used to protect investors and sustain the power of massed capital.

The costs of mass production were prohibitive for all but the very wealthiest individuals, and, even then, the risks would be too great to bear individually. The



*Glazier Stove Company, moulding room, Chelsea, Michigan, ca1900-1910. [Library of Congress](#), LC-D4-42785.*

corporation itself was ages-old, but the actual right to incorporate had generally been reserved for public works projects or government-sponsored monopolies. After the Civil War, however, the corporation, using new state incorporation laws passed during the Market Revolution of the early-nineteenth century, became a legal mechanism for nearly any enterprise to marshal vast amounts of capital while limiting the liability of shareholders. By washing their hands of legal and financial obligations while still retaining the right to profit massively, investors flooded corporations with the capital needed to industrialize.

But a competitive marketplace threatened the promise of investments. Once the efficiency gains of mass production were realized, profit margins could be undone by cutthroat competition, which kept costs low as price-cutting sunk into profits. Companies rose and fell—and investors suffered losses—as manufacturing firms struggled to maintain supremacy in their particular industries. Economies of scale were a double-edged sword: while additional

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production provided immense profits, the high fixed costs of operating expensive factories dictated that even modest losses from selling under-priced goods were preferable to not selling profitably priced goods at all. And as market share was won and lost, profits proved unstable. American industrial firms tried everything to avoid competition: they formed informal pools and trusts, they entered price-fixing agreements, they divided markets, and, when blocked by anti-trust laws and renegade price-cutting, merged into consolidations. Rather than suffer from ruinous competition, firms combined and bypassed it altogether.

Between 1895 and 1904, and particularly in the four years between 1898 and 1902, a wave of mergers rocked the American economy. Competition melted away in what is known as “the great merger movement.” In nine years, 4000 companies—nearly 20% of the American economy—were folded into rival firms. In nearly every major industry, newly consolidated firms such as General Electric and DuPont utterly dominated their market. Forty-one separate consolidations each controlled over 70% of the market in their respective industries. In 1901, financier J.P. Morgan oversaw the formation of United States Steel, built from eight leading steel companies. Industrialization was built on steel, and one firm—the world’s first billion-dollar company—controlled the market. Monopoly had arrived.



*The Breakers, Vanderbilt residence, Newport, R.I., ca.1904. Library of Congress, LC-D4-16955.*

### III. The Rise of Inequality

Industrial capitalism realized the greatest advances in efficiency and productivity that the world had ever seen. Massive new companies marshaled capital on an unprecedented scale and provided enormous profits that created unheard-of fortunes. But it also created millions of low-paid, unskilled, unreliable jobs with long hours and dangerous working conditions. Industrial capitalism confronted Gilded Age Americans with unprecedented inequalities. The sudden appearance of the extreme wealth of industrial and financial leaders alongside the crippling squalor of the urban and rural poor shocked Americans. “This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times,” economist Henry George wrote in his 1879 bestseller, *Progress and Poverty*.

The great financial and industrial titans, the so-called “robber barons,” including railroad operators such as Cornelius Vanderbilt, oilmen such as J.D. Rockefeller, steel magnates such as Andrew Carnegie, and bankers

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such as J.P. Morgan, won fortunes that, adjusted for inflation are still among the largest the nation has ever seen. According to various measurements, in 1890 the wealthiest one-percent of Americans owned one-fourth of the nation's assets; the top ten percent owned over seventy percent. And inequality only accelerated. By 1900, the richest ten percent controlled perhaps ninety percent of the nation's wealth.

As these vast and unprecedented new fortunes accumulated among a small number of wealthy Americans, new ideas arose to bestow moral legitimacy upon them. In 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution through natural selection in his *On the Origin of Species*. It was not until the 1870s, however, that those theories gained widespread traction among the majority of biologists, naturalists, and other scientists in the United States, and, in turn, challenged the social, political, and religious beliefs of many Americans. One of Darwin's greatest popularizers, the British sociologist and biologist Herbert Spencer, applied Darwin's theories to society and popularized the phrase "survival of the fittest." The fittest, Spencer said, would demonstrate their superiority through economic success, while state welfare and private charity would lead to social degeneration—it would encourage the survival of the weak.

"There must be complete surrender to the law of natural selection," the *Baltimore Sun* journalist H.



"Five Cents a Spot," unauthorized immigration lodgings in a Bayard Steet tenement, New York City, ca. 1890. *Library of Congress*. LC-USZ62-16348

L. Mencken wrote in 1907. "All growth must occur at the top. The strong must grow stronger, and that they may do so, they must waste no strength in the vain task of trying to uplift the weak." By the time Mencken wrote those words, the ideas of social Darwinism had spread among wealthy Americans and their defenders. Social Darwinism identified a natural order that extended from the laws of the cosmos to the workings of industrial society. All species and all societies, including modern humans, the theory went, were governed by a relentless competitive struggle for survival. The inequality of outcomes was to be not merely tolerated, but encouraged and celebrated. It signified the progress of species and societies. Spencer's major work, *Synthetic Philosophy*, sold nearly 400,000 copies in the United States by the time of his death in 1903. Gilded Age industrial elites, such as steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, inventor Thomas Edison, and Standard Oil's John D. Rockefeller, were among Spencer's prominent followers. Other American thinkers, such as Yale's William Graham Sumner, echoed his ideas. Sumner said, "before the

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tribunal of nature a man has no more right to life than a rattlesnake; he has no more right to liberty than any wild beast; his right to pursuit of happiness is nothing but a license to maintain the struggle for existence.”

But not all so eagerly welcomed inequalities. The spectacular growth of the U.S. economy and the ensuing inequalities in living conditions and incomes confounded many Americans. But as industrial capitalism overtook the nation, it achieved political protections. Although both major political parties facilitated the rise of big business and used state power to support the interests of capital against labor, big business looked primarily to the Republican Party.

The Republican Party had risen as an antislavery faction committed to “free labor,” but it was also an ardent supporter of American business. Abraham Lincoln had been a corporate lawyer who defended railroads, and during the Civil War the Republican national government took advantage of the war-time absence of southern Democrats to push through a pro-business agenda. The Republican congress gave millions of acres and dollars to railroad companies. Republicans became the party of business, and they dominated American politics throughout the Gilded Age and the first several decades of the twentieth century. Of the sixteen presidential elections between the Civil War and the Great Depression, Republican candidates won all but four. Republicans controlled the Senate in twenty-seven out of thirty-two sessions in the same period. Republican dominance maintained

a high protective tariff, an import tax designed to shield American businesses from foreign competition, a policy Southern planters had vehemently opposed before the war but now could do nothing to prevent. It provided the protective foundation for a new American industrial order, while Spencer’s social Darwinism provided moral justification for national policies that minimized government interference in the economy for anything other than the protection and support of business.

## IV. The Labor Movement

The ideas of social Darwinism attracted little support among the mass of American industrial laborers. American workers toiled in difficult jobs for long hours and little pay. Mechanization and mass production threw skilled laborers into unskilled positions. Industrial work ebbed and flowed with the economy. The typical industrial laborer could expect to be unemployed one month out of the year. They labored sixty hours a week and could still expect their annual income to fall below the poverty line. Among the working poor, wives and children were forced into the labor market to compensate. Crowded cities, meanwhile, failed to accommodate growing urban populations and skyrocketing rents trapped families in crowded slums.

Strikes ruptured American industry throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Workers seeking higher wages, shorter hours, and

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safer working conditions had struck throughout the antebellum era, but organized unions were fleeting and transitory. The Civil War and Reconstruction seemed to briefly distract the nation from the plight of labor, but the end of the sectional crisis and the explosive growth of big business, unprecedented fortunes, and a vast industrial workforce in the last quarter of the nineteenth century sparked the rise of a vast American labor movement.

The failure of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 convinced workers of the need to organize. Union memberships began to climb. The Knights of Labor enjoyed considerable success in the early 1880s, due in part to its efforts to unite skilled and unskilled workers. It welcomed all laborers, including women (the Knights only barred lawyers, bankers, and liquor dealers). By 1886, the Knights had over 700,000 members. The Knights envisioned a cooperative producer-centered society that rewarded labor, not capital, but, despite their sweeping vision, the Knights focused on practical gains that could be won through the organization of workers into local unions.

In Marshall, Texas, in the spring of 1886, one of Jay Gould's rail companies fired a Knights of Labor member for attending a union meeting. His local union walked off the job and soon others joined. From Texas and Arkansas into Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois, nearly 200,000 workers struck against Gould's rail lines. Gould hired strikebreakers and the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a kind of private



*Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-23725*

security contractor, to suppress the strikes and get the rails moving again. Political leaders helped him and state militias were called in support of Gould's companies. The Texas governor called out the Texas Rangers. Workers countered by destroying property, only winning them negative headlines and for many justifying the use of strikebreakers and militiamen. The strike broke, briefly undermining the Knights of Labor, but the organization regrouped and set its eyes on a national campaign for the eight-hour day.

In the summer 1886 the campaign for an eight-hour day, long a rallying cry that united American laborers, culminated in a national strike on May 1, 1886. Somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 workers struck across the country.

In Chicago, police forces killed several workers while breaking up protesters at the McCormick reaper works. Labor leaders and radicals called for a protest at Haymarket Square the following day, which police also proceeded to break up. But as they



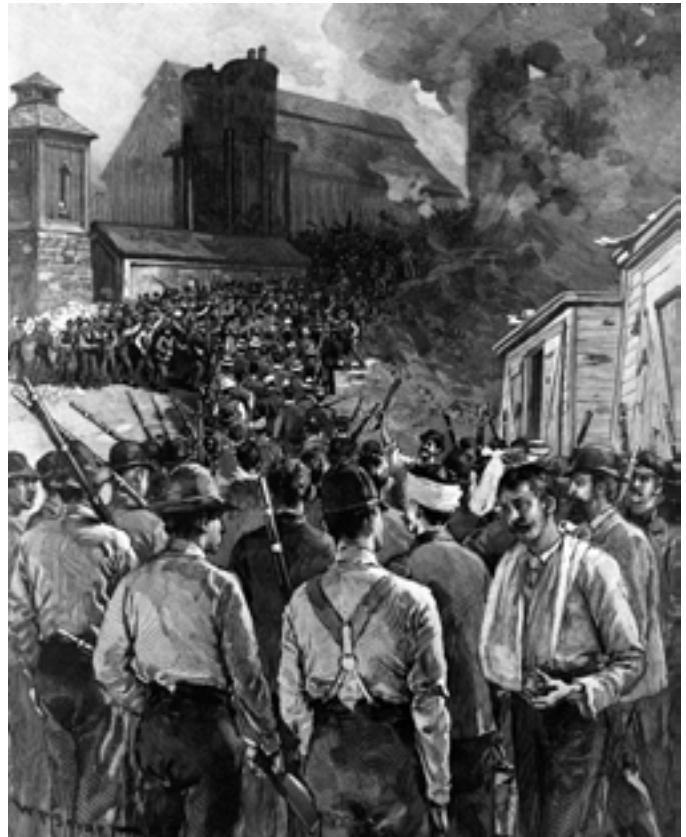
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did, a bomb exploded and killed seven policemen. Police fired into the crowd, killing four. The deaths of the Chicago policemen sparked outrage across the nation and the sensationalization of the “Haymarket Riot” helped many Americans to associate unionism with radicalism. Eight Chicago anarchists were arrested and, despite no direct evidence implicating them in the bombing, charged and found guilty of conspiracy. Four were hanged (and one committed suicide before he could be). Membership in the Knights had peaked earlier that year, but fell rapidly after Haymarket: the group became associated with violence and radicalism. The national movement for an eight-hour day collapsed.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) emerged as a conservative alternative to the vision of the Knights of Labor. An alliance of craft unions (unions composed of skilled workers), the AFL rejected the Knights’ expansive vision of a “producerist” economy and advocated “pure and simple trade unionism,” a program that aimed for practical gains (higher wages, fewer hours, and safer conditions) through a conservative approach that tried to avoid strikes. But workers continued to strike.

In 1892, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers struck at one of Carnegie’s steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania. After repeated wage cuts, workers shut the plant down and occupied the mill. The plant’s operator, Henry Clay Frick,



*An 1892 cover of Harper's Weekly depicting the Homestead Riot, showed Pinkerton men who had surrendered to the steel mill workers navigating a gauntlet of violent strikers. W.P. Synder (artist) after a photograph by Dabbs, "The Homestead Riot," 1892. [Library of Congress](#), LC-USZ62-126046.*

immediately called in hundreds of Pinkerton detectives but the steel workers fought back. The Pinkertons tried to land by river and were besieged by the striking steel workers. After several hours of pitched battle, the Pinkertons surrendered, ran a bloody gauntlet of workers, and were kicked out of the mill grounds. But the Pennsylvania governor called the state militia, broke the strike, and reopened the mill. The union was essentially destroyed in the aftermath.

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## CAPITAL AND LABOR



Two women strikers on picket line during the "Uprising of the 20,000", garment workers strike, New York City, 1910. *Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-49516*.

Still, despite repeated failure, strikes continued to roll across the industrial landscape. In 1894, workers in George Pullman's "Pullman Car" factories struck when he cut wages by a quarter but kept rents and utilities in his company town constant. The American Railway Union (ARU), led by Eugene Debs, launched a sympathy strike: the ARU would refuse to handle any Pullman cars on any rail line anywhere in the country. Thousands of workers struck and national railroad traffic ground to a halt. Unlike nearly every other major strike, the governor of Illinois sympathized with workers and refused to dispatch the state militia. It didn't matter. In July, President Grover Cleveland dispatched thousands of American soldiers to break the strike and a federal court had issued a preemptive injunction against Debs and the union's leadership. The strike violated the injunction, and Debs was arrested and imprisoned. The strike evaporated without its leadership. Jail radicalized Debs, proving to him that political and judicial leaders were merely tools for capital in its struggle against labor.

The degrading conditions of industrial labor sparked strikes across the country. The final two decades of the nineteenth century saw over 20,000 strikes and lockouts in the United States. Industrial laborers struggled to carve for themselves a piece of the prosperity lifting investors and a rapidly expanding middle class into unprecedented standards of living. But workers were not the only ones struggling to stay afloat in industrial America. Americans farmers also lashed out against the inequalities of the Gilded Age and denounced political corruption for enabling economic theft.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# UNIT 3

## TIMELINE

| A Timeline of Industrialization and Urbanization: 1856-1910 |   |
|---|---|
| 1856  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bessemer Steel Process</b> Invented.</li> </ul>   |
| 1863  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Transcontinental Railroad</b> finished.</li> </ul>  |
| 1867  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typewriter invented.</li> </ul>  |
| 1868  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Railroad refrigerator car invented.</li> </ul>   |
| 1869  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Knights of Labor</b> founded.</li> </ul>  |
| 1870  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>John D. Rockefeller</b> incorporated the <b>Standard Oil Company</b>.</li> <li>• Stock ticker invented.</li> </ul>  |
| 1871  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Boss Tweed's</b> control over New York City ended.</li> <li>• The Chicago Fire.</li> </ul>  |
| 1872  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Andrew Carnegie</b> established the world's largest steel plant.</li> </ul>   |
| 1873  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Panic of 1873</b> resulted from railroads over-expanding.</li> </ul>  |
| 1874  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barbed wire invented.</li> </ul>   |
| 1876  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alexander Graham Bell</b> invented the <b>telephone</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1877  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonograph invented.</li> <li>• The <b>Great Railroad Strike</b> resulted after <b>Baltimore &amp; Ohio Railroad</b> cuts wages.</li> </ul>  |
| 1878  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress passed the <b>Factory and Workshop Act</b>, restricting women to 56 hours of work per week or less; ten to fourteen year olds could only work half days, while children below ten could not be employed.</li> </ul> |
| 1879  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thomas Alva Edison</b> invented the <b>electric light bulb</b>.</li> </ul>  |

# TIMELINE

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1882 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Standard Oil Trust</b> organized via the use of <b>horizontal integration</b> by John D. Rockefeller.</li> <li>• New York City installs Edison's commercial, central power system, providing electricity to residents.</li> <li>• <b>Chinese Exclusion Act</b> passed.</li> <li>• Electric fan invented.</li> </ul> |
| 1883 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress passed the <b>Pendleton Act</b>, reforming the US government's civil service with exams and merit-based hiring and promotion.</li> <li>• <b>Brooklyn Bridge</b> opened.</li> </ul>  |
| 1885 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully automatic machine gun (the <b>Maxim Gun</b>) was invented by Hiram Maxim.</li> <li>• Adding machine invented.</li> </ul>   |
| 1886 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In May, anarchists throw a bomb during a labor demonstration. Became known as the <b>Haymarket Square Bombing or Riot</b>.</li> </ul>  |
| 1886 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>American Federation of Labor</b> founded; <b>Samuel Gompers</b> was its first president.</li> <li>• Coca-Cola established.</li> </ul>   |
| 1887 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interstate Commerce Act</b> passed by Congress.</li> </ul>  |
| 1888 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kodak camera invented.</li> </ul>  |
| 1890 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sherman Antitrust Act</b> passed by Congress, ending trusts and empowering Congress to regulate interstate commerce.</li> <li>• Electric chair invented.</li> <li>• <b>Jacob Riis</b> published <u>How the Other Half Lives</u>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1891 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zipper invented.</li> </ul>  |
| 1892 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the first of the year, <b>Ellis Island</b> opened.</li> <li>• The <b>Homestead Steel Plant Strike</b> occurred in June, led by the <b>Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1893 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In July, economic collapse of the railroads results in the <b>Panic of 1893</b>, leaving millions unemployed.</li> <li>• <b>World's Columbian Exposition</b> opened in Chicago.</li> </ul>   |

# UNIT 3

## TIMELINE

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1894 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Pullman Steel Strike</b> occurred in July, led by the <b>American Railway Union</b>.</li> <li>The Royal Ponciana Hotel Opens in Florida becoming the gateway of the tourist industry in that state, and other such grand hotels open across the nation in order to capture the desire of the wealthier classes to escape the urban environment.</li> </ul> |
| 1895 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety razor invented.</li> <li>Boston Public Library opened.</li> <li><b>J. P. Morgan</b> bailed out the United States Treasury.</li> </ul>  |
| 1896 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electric stove invented.</li> </ul>   |
| 1897 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>America's first subway system opens in Boston.</li> <li><b>Coney Island</b> opens Steeplechase Park (New York).</li> </ul>  |
| 1899 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tape recorder invented.</li> </ul>  |
| 1901 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>US Steel</b> incorporated with \$1.4 billion.</li> </ul>   |
| 1906 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Hepburn Act</b> is passed by Congress, allowing Interstate Commerce Commission to set maximum railroad rates.</li> </ul>   |
| 1907 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigration to the United States hits its peak. Between 1890 &amp; 1920, fifteen million immigrants enter the US.</li> </ul>  |
| 1910 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformers document that over two million children under age 25 were working in horrific conditions in the industrial sector.</li> </ul>   |



# LATE 19TH CENTURY: POLITICS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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## Late 19th Century: Politics and Foreign Relations

As the U.S. expanded its commercial and territorial empire overseas, the nation more and more was putting itself at risk of entangling itself in world affairs. Traditionally, politically and militarily isolationist, the U.S. (by expanding as it did in this era politically at home and in its foreign relations overseas) opened the door for it to become a major world power in the early 20th century. The growth of the role of the federal government during this time was unprecedented. And, although seemingly not much by today's standards, this expansion of the federal government's power set the groundwork from which future generations of progressive-minded reformers, grass-roots groups, and politicians could work to improve the conditions of the average American.

## Politics

### General Characteristics:

During the latter part of the 19th century, as the nation tried to define how much power the federal government should have or how much it should do for the nation, two basic views fought it out for their ways to prevail. One group was the hands-off conservatives who viewed the role of the federal government to be minimal in issues like aid to drought-stricken farmers, breaking up monopolies, and establishing veterans' hospitals. The other group was the hands-on progressives. These people were often our grass-roots groups

pushing government involvement in order to even the playing field, so that the majority of people could have the opportunity to make a decent living wage. Such groups were comprised of workers and farmers, as in the Populist (People's Party). And they certainly would have supported aid for the farmers, the end of monopolies, and veterans' hospitals.

If we view the politics of this era as a scale we would see that immediately after the Civil War the hands-off group weighed more heavily on the right of the scale. Once the conditions of industrialization, urbanization, and the western farmer became more than private groups or individuals could bear, the hands-on group pushed down on the left hand side of the scale. The scale will "wobble" to one side or another from one decade or generation to another, meaning that in some eras the hands-off group dominated politics, while in others the hands-on group had gained political strongholds. This is a simplification of the politics of the era, but it works for our purposes here.

It is important to note that politics of the late 19th century also primarily was locally and state oriented. Meaning that the presidents and national politics were less important to the average American than what was happening in their localities and states. Parties operated at the state level, as they had throughout the 19th century, and after Lincoln, presidents tended to be weaker, party figure-heads who towed the party-line. This is why many of us today do not know that Chester A. Arthur was president!

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The presidents of the late 19th century have been, well, forgettable in American political memory. This is not to understate the accomplishments of these men as individuals, but rather it reflects the political culture of the era. So, how did these guys even get elected, if state and local politics dominated the day?! Well, the average voter looked to the state party leaders for recommendations (state/local candidates would endorse federal and presidential candidates) on for whom they should vote. Plus, in political culture, there is the phenomenon of voting the way one's family did historically. These factors combined with the fact that many of the campaigns for these guys were quite the entertainment spectacle, often complete with beer and food (Starting to get the picture?) made getting votes possible. But, keep in mind that between 1872 and 1896 no president won the majority of the popular vote. Thus, it was in Congress where the nation's political progress and struggles were played out between the two major political parties. Therefore if one wanted real change in government, one had to target congressmen and make them accountable to the public will or vote them out and replacing them with someone who would be responsive to his constituents. (Often times, that meant running your own candidates, and as we shall see, specifically this was done via the organization of a third party.)

So, in terms of differences between the two political parties, Democrats and Republicans, there really was not much of one, just like today. BOTH parties were

split between their hands-off and hands-on elements. This meant that one could be a hands-off conservative Democrat (or Republican) OR a hands-on progressive Democrat (or Republican). Keep in mind that before the Civil War major ideological differences defined the parties. {Unlike today the Republicans were the liberals of their era, wanting more government control and an end to slavery in the territories. The Democrats were the conservatives of that time, preferring states rights.} After the Civil War, the parties had to regroup and individual politicians had to decide where they stood on the question of how much should the federal government do. Thus, this was a confusing and complex time politically in the nation. The only major partisan difference of the era was that the Republicans favored high protective tariffs to protect American industry, while the Democrats preferred lower protective tariffs to promote free trade between nations and greater purchasing power for the average American at home. But, besides the tariff, that's it, as far as major differences between the two parties went.

It is also important to note that during this era, business and politics mixed. Parties were lead by the interests of the upper classes and businesses. Many in the business community wanted reforms in government. Smaller businesses, which collectively present a powerful force, wanted the government to regulate big business and bust up the monopolies. Thus as the forces of the middle classes and the lower classes started to combine (not cooperatively but just in practical fact) the federal government gradually changed

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to become more responsive to what the people wanted. What did the people want? They wanted a more hands-on progressive government. Eventually, by the time of the Depression our scale (literally) “crashes” down on the hands-on progressive side. And, BOTH the Republicans and Democrats came to favor hands-on government. The only difference between the two parties was just how progressive should the government be. The Republicans were more conservative in their progressivism, while the Democrats were more liberal in their progressivism. The question of how progressive the government should be still exists in politics today.

### **The Presidents:**

After the corrupt administration of Ulysses Grant, the Republicans wanted to present a candidate of uprightness and virtue in order to clean up the image of the popular Republican party. (Remember the Republicans were riding on the coat tails of Lincoln, and the Democrats had a bad rap because of being the popular party in the defeated, ex-slaveholding, South.) The nation elected Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. In his administration he wanted to regulate the money supply due to the financial problems in the nation at the time. It was in his administration that people called for the reform of the civil service, specifically to end the spoils system of rewarding political supporters with government jobs. Tensions within the Republican Party led to a split over who would control the party and thus the political patronage.

The more progressive (reform-minded) side of the party won out with the election of James Garfield in 1880. He favored civil service reforms and wanted a civil service law enacted. However, he was assassinated in 1881, and his successor Chester Arthur was a conservative, hands-off, Republican. Despite this, the Civil Service Reform League got Congress to pass the Pendleton Act (Civil Service Law) which established examinations for hiring and standards of merit for promotions, and forbade political candidates from soliciting money from government workers. The ultimate effect of this law was to create a civil service independent of party politics. And, it helped to further modernize the federal bureaucracy, which became critical as the powers of the government increased into the 20th century.

By the end of Arthur’s term the Republicans were divided and feuding so much that a Democrat was able to win the Presidency in 1884. Grover Cleveland was a hands-off, conservative democrat who lowered the tariff angering the business classes in the country, but who also refused aid to drought-stricken farmers in Texas and cut millions of federal monies to disabled veterans. So, what had Cleveland done? He had alienated business, farmers, and veterans (like those in the veterans’ organization the Grand Army of the Republic). Combined these three forces were enough to ensure that Cleveland would not be reelected (at least not consecutively).

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In 1888, Benjamin Harrison (a hands-on, progressive Republican) became president and he immediately revamped the monies to the veterans and took it a step further. He in fact created America's first large scale welfare program - veteran's hospitals. And, being a Republican he raised the tariff in 1890. Most importantly during that year was Congress passing the Sherman-Antitrust Act, which made monopolies illegal and gave the federal government the power to prosecute those corporations maintaining monopolies. This was the first large scale attempt by the federal government to regulate trade and business. However, it generally failed because businesses found ways around the law, and more hands-off administrations refused to enforce the act.

Despite these more progressive moves, the public was not content, especially workers and farmers. Washington literally turned into a hot bed of lobbyist activity, and movements toward a third party would prove to be a powerful force in changing American politics and the role of the federal government. This meant that the 1890s was a decade of intense grass-roots political activism.

## Grassroots Politics:

### *Grangers*

Farmers themselves organized into Granges. Granges initially were social/educational organizations for farmers. However, they quickly became a political lobbyist group against the abuses of bankers, grain

operatives, and railroads of the farmers. Eventually, by 1867, eleven states had Granger parties. And, in many states, the party got Granger laws passes, which set a maximum cost for shipping on their intrastate railroads. This was a step at regulating the railroads which had been charging so much for shipping goods to market that the average farmer could not make a reasonable profit.

### *Populists*

Various organizations representing the interests of farmers and workers combined in the 1880s into the People's Party (Populists), which ran its first presidential candidate in 1891. This was a grass-roots political organization.

Philosophically - they wanted to reorganize society so that all members could share the wealth and prosperity. This was NOT socialism or communism, but rather they wanted the government to "even the playing field" through legislation prohibiting the abuses of economic power by one group upon another. They wanted everyone to at least be able to have a chance at economic success. {This did not mean a hand-out from the federal government, but rather the opportunity to work hard and succeed or failure on one's own account, not because of the economic abuses of big business.}

Their agenda was for the federal government to target monopolies, take action on behalf of workers and farmers, and to increase the popular control of

## LATE 19TH CENTURY: POLITICS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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the government. They worked their way up asking for these reforms first at the local and state level and eventually at the federal level (when appropriate).

In order to meet their agenda, specifically they wanted the following to be implemented.

1. Direct Election of Senators - In many states state legislators elected who would represent the state in the senate in Washington D.C.. This made senators less accountable to the average voter.
2. Secret Ballot - In most states one's vote was not secret and anyone could find out how another person voted. This was problematic for a multitude of common sense reasons.
3. Secret Ballot - In most states one's vote was not secret and anyone could find out how another person voted. This was problematic for a multitude of common sense reasons.
4. Referendums - Bills or constitutional amendments are submitted for voter approval after being passed by a legislative body.
5. Graduated Income Tax - Persons pay a certain percentage of their incomes versus a flat rate tax. Remember, a \$10.00 tax to a millionaire was nothing compared to a factory worker.
6. Eight Hour Work Day - Many work days were 10, 14, 18 hours long. Workers believed government needed to ensure a reasonable work-day for them.
7. Woman's Suffrage - In many states women already had the right to vote, but yet, women were not considered full-citizens of the U.S. until 1920. In western states with smaller populations, men needed women to vote in order for the common man to gain political power. Thus, in many states, especially in the western parts of the country, women were given the right to vote. The working class male and the politicians, who represented him, need the votes of women to be politically powerful at the state level, and eventually the federal level.

The Populist Party did well in the 1892 presidential election where Democrat, Grover Cleveland was able to muster enough support to come back for a second term by defeating Republican, Benjamin Harrison, and Populist, James Weaver. Cleveland's second administration was worse than his first. Immediately into it, the Depression of 1893 struck, due to the railroads over-expanding financially, leaving around 20% of Americans unemployed. All of Cleveland's steps to improve the situation only made the matter worse. Thus, these grass-roots groups had their cause strengthened during his administration. However, the Populist Party died out during McKinley's administration, due to positive changes in the economy that benefited the worker and the farmer.

### The Election of 1896:

This was the most important election in the Gilded Era. In the 1894 elections, progressive Republicans



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had gained seats in Congress, foreshadowing the election of hands-on President William McKinley. This election had the highest percentage of voter turnout in the history of the nation! This was a fact which reflected not only the importance of politics to the average American, but also the grass-roots political activism of the era. This election asked the nation if it wanted to go in a more hands-on progressive direction. At this time, the American public said “yes!” The election itself was about money, since the depression had caused financial loss and instability. The Republicans wanted gold to back the dollar to create a sound monetary system. Those Democrats and Populists who supported candidate William Jennings Bryan felt that silver was a strong metal to back the dollar, while not being too inaccessible to the common man (silver is less expensive than gold). Ultimately the Republicans won, using scare tactics to convince the common person that economic ruin would result if the nation adopted the silver standard.

## McKinley’s Administration:

McKinley’s presidency was dominated by relative prosperity. As a Republican he increased the tariff, and as promised he committed the nation to the gold standard via the Currency Act of 1900. Farm prices went up and gold being found in Alaska helped stabilize the economy and quelled for a time the grass-roots political efforts of the day.

## Concluding Thoughts on Politics:

Despite the fact that the populists died out as a result of economic prosperity, their ideology DID NOT! When the Populists were alive and well, they did not get much of what they wanted. However, since their ideology survived and some reforms were made, eventually in the future when a generation of American politicians grew up and made their way up the political ladder to Washington, the dreams and wants of the Populists were realized. Think back on the list of what the populists wanted. There is not one thing on that list that is not part of our political reality today. Successive generations built upon what the Populists had started, and therefore collectively they were very important to the American story.

## Foreign Affairs

### General Characteristics:

McKinley’s administration will be dominated by foreign affairs. Much of this involvement was spurred by the interest in an expanded American navy. In the 1880s and 90s Congress and the public took an interest in developing the navy. Following the thinking of Alfred T. Mahan in his book The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, which advocated the U.S. becoming a great sea-power, Congress commissioned the production of 18 more battleships, over 50 additional cruisers, and a multitude of smaller ships. This was the start of the nation’s modern Navy. The

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U.S. also had an active merchant marine, which was engaged in commercial activities around the world.

As a result of commercial interests, the U.S. asserted the Monroe Doctrine, which told Europe to keep out of the affairs of the western hemisphere. Specifically enforcing the doctrine, the U.S. told Britain to submit to arbitration in a dispute over lands in South America (Venezuela Crisis 1895). Under a threat of force, the British backed down and allowed the U.S. to arbitrate the situation. Finally the U.S. had the ability to back up its doctrine with muscle, and that led to the U.S. flexing its muscles not only in Latin America but also in the Pacific.

Again backing its commercial interests, the U.S. in 1892 disposed of the tribal leadership in Hawaii and took Hawaii as a territory of the nation. The U.S. also acquired territories from the Spanish-American War (1898) in which the U.S. defended Cuba's efforts to gain independence from Spain, while claiming the territories of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam for itself. The U.S. also retained great influence over Cuba, by reneging on its promise to withdraw troops after Cuba gained independence. Although treating these areas as territories, which could possibly become states in the nation, the U.S. essentially had become an island empire, as well as world power through its defeat of Spain.

With that status, the U.S. felt the need to control the native peoples of these islands. For instance in the Philippines, an independence movement from Spain

started before the Spanish-American war. These freedom fighters wanted autonomy for the Philippines and were no more pleased with U.S. control than they were with Spanish control. As a result guerrilla warfare against the U.S. broke out until the U.S. sent in over 5,000 troops to put down the rebellion in 1899. (The Philippines obtained self-governance in 1902 and independence from the U.S. in 1946.)

During this era the U.S. was looking to expand its markets to the rest of the world, with a specific focus on Asia and China. The U.S. pushed for and got the Open Door Policy for U.S. trade with European powers in China, and had to commit troops to defend European-U.S. economic interests there against those hoping to oust westerners from the European-controlled Chinese provinces in what was called the Boxer Rebellion (1900).

## America Becomes a World Power

“The Spanish-American War: The Philippines, Guam, Cuba, and Puerto Rico (03:02): At the outbreak of war with Spain American troops helped Philippine rebels defeat Spanish colonial rule; American troops then captured Guam. In Cuba African-American regiments supported Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders at Kettle Hill. Capturing San Juan Hill and destroying ships in the Straits of Havana sealed an American victory; the Spanish-American War ended after four months.”

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

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### V. The Populist Movement

“Wall street owns the country,” the Populist leader Mary Elizabeth Lease told dispossessed farmers around 1890. “It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street.” Farmers, who remained a majority of the American population through the first decade of the twentieth century, were hit especially hard by industrialization. The expanding markets and technological improvements that increased efficiency also decreased commodity prices. Commercialization of agriculture put farmers in the hands of bankers, railroads, and various middle men. As the decades passed, more and more farmers fell ever farther into debt, lost their land, and were forced to enter the industrial workforce or, especially in the South, became landless farmworkers.

The rise of industrial giants reshaped the American countryside and the Americans who called it home. Railroad spur lines, telegraph lines, and credit crept into farming communities and linked rural Americans, who still made up a majority of the country’s population, with towns, regional cities, American financial centers in Chicago and New York, and, eventually, London and the world’s financial markets. Meanwhile, improved farm machinery, easy credit, and the latest consumer goods flooded the countryside. But new connections and new conveniences came at a price.

Farmers had always been dependent on the whims of the weather and local markets. But now they staked their financial security on a national economic system subject to rapid price swings, rampant speculation, and limited regulation. Frustrated American farmers attempted to reshape the fundamental structures of the nation’s political and economic systems, systems they believed enriched parasitic bankers and industrial monopolists at the expense of the many laboring farmers who fed the nation by producing its many crops and farm goods. Their dissatisfaction with an erratic and impersonal system put many of them at the forefront of what would become perhaps the most serious challenge to the established political economy of Gilded Age America. Farmers organized, and launched their challenge first through the cooperatives of the Farmers’ Alliance and later through the politics of the People’s (or Populist) Party.

Mass production and business consolidations spawned giant corporations that monopolized nearly every sector of the U.S. economy in the decades after the Civil War. In contrast, the economic power of the individual farmer sunk into oblivion. Threatened by ever-plummeting commodity prices and ever-rising indebtedness, Texas agrarians met in Lampasas in 1877 and organized the first Farmers’ Alliance to restore some economic power to farmers as they dealt with railroads, merchants, and bankers. If big business would rely on their numerical strength to exert their economic will, why shouldn’t farmers unite to counter

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that power? They could share machinery, bargain from wholesalers, and negotiate higher prices for their crops. Over the following years, organizers spread from town to town across the former Confederacy, Midwest, and the Great Plains, holding evangelical-style camp meetings, distributing pamphlets, and establishing over 1,000 Alliance newspapers. As the Alliance spread, so too did its near-religious vision of the nation's future as a "cooperative commonwealth" that would protect the interests of the many from the predatory greed of the few. At its peak, the Farmers' Alliance claimed 1,500,000 members meeting in 40,000 local sub-alliances.

The Alliance's most innovative programs were a series of farmer's cooperatives that enabled farmers to negotiate higher prices for their crops and lower prices for the goods they purchased. These cooperatives spread across the South between 1886 and 1892 and claimed more than a million members at its high point. While most failed financially, these "philanthropic monopolies," as one Alliance speaker termed them, inspired farmers to look to large-scale organization to cope with their economic difficulties. But cooperation was only part of the Alliance message.

In the South, Alliance-backed Democratic candidates won 4 governorships and 48 congressional seats in 1890. But at a time when falling prices and rising debts conspired against the survival of family farmers, the two political parties seemed incapable



*The banner of the first Texas Farmers' Alliance.*

of representing the needs of poor farmers. And so Alliance members organized a political party—the People's Party, or the Populists, as they came to be known. The Populists attracted supporters across the nation by appealing to those convinced that there were deep flaws in the political economy of Gilded Age America, flaws that both political parties refused to address. Veterans of earlier fights for currency reform, disaffected industrial laborers, proponents of the benevolent socialism of Edward Bellamy's popular *Looking Backward*, and the champions of Henry George's farmer-friendly "single-tax" proposal joined Alliance members in the new party. The Populists nominated former Civil War general James B. Weaver as their presidential candidate at the party's first national convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4, 1892.

At that meeting the party adopted a platform that crystallized the Alliance's cooperate program into a coherent political vision. The platform's

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preamble, written by longtime political iconoclast and Minnesota populist Ignatius Donnelly, warned that “[t]he fruits of the toil of millions [had been] boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few.” Taken as a whole, the Omaha Platform and the larger Populist movement sought to counter the scale and power of monopolistic capitalism with a strong, engaged, and modern federal government. The platform proposed an unprecedented expansion of federal power. It advocated nationalizing the country’s railroad and telegraph systems to ensure that essential services would be run in the best interests of the people. In an attempt to deal with the lack of currency available to farmers, it advocated postal savings banks to protect depositors and extend credit. It called for the establishment of a network of federally-managed warehouses—called subtreasuries—which would extend government loans to farmers who stored crops in the warehouses as they awaited higher market prices. To save debtors it promoted an inflationary monetary policy by monetizing silver. Direct election of Senators and the secret ballot would ensure that this federal government would serve the interest of the people rather than entrenched partisan interests and a graduated income tax would protect Americans from the establishment of an American aristocracy. Combined, these efforts would, Populists believed, help to shift economic and political power back toward the nation’s producing classes.

In the Populists first national election campaign in 1892, Weaver received over one million votes (and

22 electoral votes), a truly startling performance that signaled a bright future for the Populists. And when the Panic of 1893 sparked the worst economic depression the nation had ever yet seen, the Populist movement won further credibility and gained even more ground. Kansas Populist Mary Lease, one of the movement’s most fervent speakers, famously, and perhaps apocryphally, called on farmers to “raise less corn and more Hell.” Populist stump speakers crossed the country, speaking with righteous indignation, blaming the greed of business elites and corrupt party politicians for causing the crisis fueling America’s widening inequality. Southern orators like Texas’ James “Cyclone” Davis and Georgian firebrand Tom Watson stumped across the South decrying the abuses of northern capitalists and the Democratic Party. Pamphlets such as W.H. Harvey’s *Coin’s Financial School* and Henry D. Lloyd’s *Wealth against Commonwealth* provided Populist answers to the age’s many perceived problems. The faltering economy combined with the Populist’s extensive organizing. In the 1894 elections, Populists elected six senators and seven representatives to Congress. The third party seemed destined to conquer American politics.

The movement, however, still faced substantial obstacles, especially in the South. The failure of Alliance-backed Democrats to live up to their campaign promises drove some southerners to break with the party of their forefathers and join the Populists. Many, however, were unwilling



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to take what was, for southerners, a radical step. Southern Democrats, for their part, responded to the Populist challenge with electoral fraud and racial demagoguery. Both severely limited Populist gains. The Alliance struggled to balance the pervasive white supremacy of the American South with their call for a grand union of the producing class. American racial attitudes—and its virulent southern strain—simply proved too formidable. Democrats race-baited Populists and Populists capitulated. The Colored Farmers Alliance, which had formed as a segregated sister organization to the Southern Alliance, and had as many as 250,000 members at its peak, fell prey to racial and class-based hostility. The group went into rapid decline in 1891 when faced with the violent white repression of a number of Colored Alliance-sponsored cotton-picker strikes. Racial mistrust and division remained the rule, even among Populists, and even in North Carolina, where a political marriage of convenience between Populists and Republicans resulted in the election of Populist Marion Butler to the Senate. Populists opposed Democratic corruption, but this did not necessarily make them champions of interracial democracy. As Butler explained to an audience in Edgecombe County, “[w]e are in favor of white supremacy, but we are not in favor of cheating and fraud to get it.” In fact, across much of the South, Populists and Farmers Alliance members were often at the forefront of the movement for disfranchisement and segregation.



*William Jennings Bryan, 1896. [Library of Congress](#), LC-USZC2-6259*

Populism exploded in popularity. The first major political force to tap into the vast discomfort of many Americans with the disruptions wrought by industrial capitalism, the Populist Party seemed poised to capture political victory. And yet, even as Populism gained national traction, the movement was stumbling. The party's often divided leadership found it difficult to shepherd what remained a diverse and loosely organized coalition of reformers towards unified political action. The Omaha platform was a radical document, and some state party leaders selectively embraced its reforms. More importantly, the institutionalized parties were still too strong, and the Democrats loomed, ready to swallow Populist frustrations and inaugurate a new era of American politics.

## VI. William Jennings Bryan and the Politics of Gold

William Jennings Bryan (March 19, 1860 – July 26, 1925) accomplished many different things in his life: he was a skilled orator, a Nebraska Congressman, a

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three-time presidential candidate, the U.S. Secretary of the State under Woodrow Wilson, and a lawyer who supported prohibition and opposed Darwinism (most notably in the 1925 Scopes “Monkey” Trial). In terms of his political career, he won national renown for his attack on the gold standard and his tireless promotion of free silver and policies for the benefit of the average American. Although Bryan was unsuccessful in winning the presidency, he forever altered the course of American political history.

Bryan was born in Salem, Illinois, in 1860 to a devout family with a strong passion for law, politics, and public speaking. At twenty, he attended Union Law College in Chicago and passed the bar shortly thereafter. After his marriage to Mary Baird in Illinois, Bryan and his young family relocated to Nebraska, where he won a reputation among the state’s Democratic Party leaders as an extraordinary orator. Bryan would later win recognition as one of the greatest speakers in American history.

When economic depressions struck the Midwest in the late 1880s, despairing farmers faced low crop prices and found few politicians on their side. While many rallied to the Populist cause, Bryan worked from within the Democratic Party, using the strength of his oratory. After delivering one speech, he told his wife, “Last night I found that I had a power over the audience. I could move them as I chose. I have more than usual power as a speaker... God grant that I may use it wisely.” He soon won election to the Nebraska House of Representatives, where he served for two



*With the country in financial chaos after the Panic of 1893, William Jennings Bryan arose as a political star when he advocated bimetallism – the acceptance of both gold and silver as legal tender. Bryan’s Cross of Gold speech at 1896 Democratic National Convention, which he concluded with the fiery statement that “you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold,” secured him the Democratic nomination for President in 1896. Artist’s conception of William Jennings Bryan after the Cross of Gold speech, 1900. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan_after_speech.png), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan\\_after\\_speech.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan_after_speech.png).*

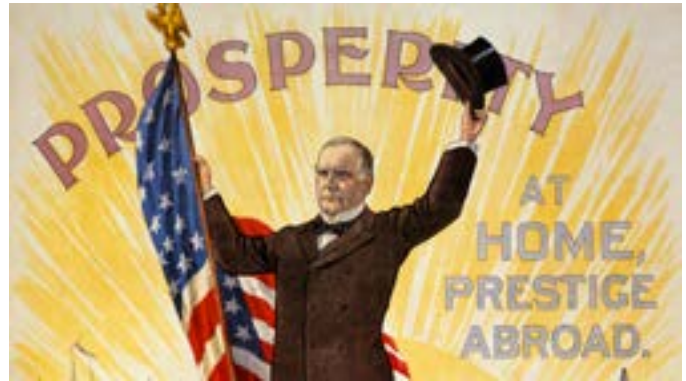
terms. Although he lost a bid to join the Nebraska Senate, Bryan refocused on a much higher political position: the presidency of the United States. There, he believed he could change the country by defending farmers and urban laborers against the corruptions of big business.

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In 1895-1896, Bryan launched a national speaking tour in which he promoted the free coinage of silver. He believed that “bimetallism,” by inflating American currency, could alleviate farmers’ debts. In contrast, Republicans championed the gold standard and a flat money supply. American monetary standards became a leading campaign issue. Then, in July 1896, the Democratic Party’s national convention met to settle upon a choice for their president nomination in the upcoming election. The party platform asserted that the gold standard was “not only un-American but anti-American.” Bryan spoke last at the convention. He astounded his listeners. At the conclusion of his stirring speech, he declared, “Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.” After a few seconds of stunned silence, the convention went wild. Some wept, many shouted, and the band began to play “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” Bryan received the 1896 Democratic presidential nomination.

The Republicans ran William McKinley, an economic conservative that championed business interests and the gold standard. Bryan crisscrossed the country spreading the silver gospel. The election drew enormous attention and much emotion. According to Bryan’s wife, he received two thousand letters of support every day that year, an enormous amount for



*Conservative William McKinley promised prosperity to ordinary Americans through his “sound money” initiative, a policy he ran on during his election campaigns in 1896 and again in 1900. This election poster touts McKinley’s gold standard policy as bringing “Prosperity at Home, Prestige Abroad.” “Prosperity at home, prestige abroad,” [between 1895 and 1900]. [Library of Congress](#).*

any politician, let alone one not currently in office. Yet Bryan could not defeat the McKinley. The pro-business Republicans outspent Bryan’s campaign fivefold. A notably high 79.3% of eligible American voters cast ballots and turnout averaged 90% in areas supportive of Bryan, but Republicans swayed the population-dense Northeast and Great Lakes region and stymied the Democrats.

In early 1900, Congress passed the Gold Standard Act, which put the country on the gold standard, effectively ending the debate over the nation’s monetary policy. Bryan sought the presidency again in 1900 but was again defeated, as he would be yet again in 1908.

Bryan was among the most influential losers in American political history. When the agrarian wing of the Democratic Party nominated the Nebraska congressman in 1896, Bryan’s fiery condemnation of north-



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eastern financial interests and his impassioned calls for “free and unlimited coinage of silver” co-opted popular Populist issues. The Democrats stood ready to siphon off a large proportion of the Populist’s political support. When the People’s Party held its own convention two weeks later, the party’s moderate wing, in a fiercely contested move, overrode the objections of more ideologically pure Populists and nominated Bryan as the Populist candidate as well. This strategy of temporary “fusion” movement fatally fractured the movement and the party. Populist energy moved from the radical-yet-still-weak People’s Party to the more moderate-yet-powerful Democratic Party. And although at first glance the Populist movement appears to have been a failure—its minor electoral gains were short-lived, it did little to dislodge the entrenched two-party system, and the Populist dream of a cooperative commonwealth never took shape—yet, in terms of lasting impact, the Populist Party proved the most significant third-party movement in American history. The agrarian revolt would establish the roots of later reform and the majority of policies outlined within the Omaha Platform would eventually be put into law over the following decades under the management of middle-class reformers. In large measure, the Populist vision laid the intellectual groundwork for the coming progressive movement.

## VII. The Socialists

American socialists carried on the Populists’ radical tradition by uniting farmers and workers in a



*William Jennings Bryan espoused Populists politics while working within the two-party system as a Democrat. Republicans characterized this as a kind hijacking by Bryan, arguing that the Democratic Party was now a party of a radical faction of Populists. The pro-Republican magazine Judge rendered this perspective in a political cartoon showing Bryan (representing Populism writ large) as huge serpent swallowing a bucking mule (representing the Democratic party). Political Cartoon, Judge, 1896. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan,\\_Judge\\_magazine,\\_1896.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan,_Judge_magazine,_1896.jpg).*

sustained, decades-long political struggle to reorder American economic life. Socialists argued that wealth and power were consolidated in the hands of too few individuals, that monopolies and trusts controlled too much of the economy, and that owners and investors grew rich while the very workers who produced their wealth, despite massive productivity gains and rising national wealth, still suffered from low pay, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. Karl Marx had described the new industrial economy as a worldwide class struggle between the wealthy “bourgeoisie,” who owned the means of production, such as factories and farms, and the “proletariat,” factory workers and tenant farmers who worked only for the wealth of others. According to Eugene Debs, socialists sought “the overthrow of the capitalist system and the emancipation of the working class from wage

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slavery.” Under an imagined socialist cooperative commonwealth, the means of production would be owned collectively, ensuring that all men and women received a fair wage for their labor. According to socialist organizer and newspaper editor Oscar Ameringer, socialists wanted “ownership of the trust by the government, and the ownership of the government by the people.”

The Socialist movement drew from a diverse constituency. Party membership was open to all regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity, or religion. Many prominent Americans, such as Helen Keller, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London, became socialists. They were joined by masses of American laborers from across the United States: factory workers, miners, railroad builders, tenant farmers, and small farmers all united under the red flag of socialism.

The Socialist Party of America (SPA), founded in 1901, carried on the American third-party political tradition. Socialist mayors were elected in 33 cities and towns—ranging from Berkeley, California to Schenectady, New York—and two socialists—Victor Berger from Wisconsin and Meyer London from New York—won congressional seats. All told, over 1000 socialist candidates won various American political offices. Julius A. Wayland, editor of the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, proclaimed that “socialism is coming. It’s coming like a prairie fire and nothing can stop it ... you can feel it in the air.” By 1913 there were 150,000 members of the Socialist



American socialist leader Eugene Victor Debs, 1912. *Library of Congress, LC-DIG-hec-01584*

Party and, in 1912, Eugene V. Debs, the Indiana-born Socialist Party candidate for president, received almost one million votes, or six percent of the total.

Over the following years, however, the embrace of many socialist policies by progressive reformers, internal ideological and tactical disagreements, a failure to dissuade most Americans of the perceived incompatibility between socialism and American values, and, especially, government oppression and censorship, particularly during and after World War I, ultimately sunk the party. Like the Populists, however, socialists had tapped into a deep well of discontent and their energy and organizing filtered out into American culture and American politics.

## VIII. Conclusion

The march of capital transformed patterns of American life. While some enjoyed unprecedented levels of wealth, and an ever-growing slice of middle-class workers won an ever more comfortable standard of living, vast numbers of farmers lost their land and a



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growing industrial working class struggled to earn wages sufficient to support themselves and their families. Industrial capitalism brought wealth and it brought poverty; it created owners and investors and it created employees. But whether winners or losers in the new economy, all Americans reckoned in some way with their new industrial world.

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*"School Begins," Puck, January 25, 1899.*

## I. Introduction

"Empire" might most readily recall ancient Rome, military conquests, the British Empire, the mercantile capitalism of the British East India Company, the partitioning of Africa or the Middle East into colonies, military and administrative occupations, resource exploitation, and generally a model in which some central power exploits peripheral colonies to advance its own interests. But empires can take many forms, and imperial processes can occur in many contexts. 100 years after the United States won its independence from the British Empire, had it become an empire of its own?

In the decades after the American Civil War, the United States exerted itself in the service of American interests around the world. In the Pacific, Latin America, and the Middle East, and most explicitly in the Spanish-American War and the foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the United States expanded upon a long history of exploration, trade, and cultural exchange to practice something new, something that looked much like empire. The question of American imperialism, then, seeks to understand not only direct American interventions in such places as Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico, but also the deeper history of American engagement with the wider world, and the subsequent ways in which American

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economic, political, and cultural power has shaped the actions, choices, and possibilities of other groups and nations.

But as the United States asserted itself abroad, it received ever more numbers of foreign peoples at home. European and Asian immigrants poured into the United States. In a sense, imperialism and immigration raised similar questions about American identity: who was an “American,” and who wasn’t? What were the nation’s obligations to foreign powers and foreign peoples? And how accessible—and how fluid—should American identity be for newcomers? All such questions confronted late-nineteenth-century Americans with unprecedented urgency.

## II. Patterns of American Interventions

American interventions in Mexico, China, and the Middle East reflected a new eagerness of the United States to intervene in foreign governments to protect American economic interests abroad.

The United States had long been involved in Pacific commerce. American ships had been traveling to China, for instance, since 1784. As a percentage of total American foreign trade, the Asian trade remained comparatively small, and yet the idea that Asian markets were vital to American commerce affected American policy and, when those markets were threatened, prompted interventions.<sup>1</sup> In 1899,

Secretary of State John Hay articulated the “Open Door Policy,” which called for all western powers to have equal access to Chinese markets. Hay feared that other imperial powers—Japan, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia—planned to carve China into spheres of influence. It was in the economic interest of American business to maintain China for free trade. The following year, in 1900, American troops joined a multinational force that intervened to prevent the closing of trade by putting down the Boxer Rebellion, a movement opposed to foreign businesses and missionaries operating in China. President McKinley sent the U.S. Army without consulting Congress, setting a precedent for U.S. presidents to order American troops to action around the world under their executive powers.

The United States was not only ready to intervene in foreign affairs to preserve foreign markets, it was willing to take territory. The United States acquired its first Pacific territories with the Guano Islands Act of 1856. Guano—collected bird excrement—was a popular fertilizer integral to industrial farming. The Act authorized and encouraged Americans to venture into the seas and claim islands with guano deposits for the United States. These acquisitions were the first insular, unincorporated territories of the United States: they were neither part of a state nor a federal district, and they were not on the path to ever attain such a status. The Act, though little known, offered a precedent for future American acquisitions.

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Merchants, of course, weren't the only American travelers in the Pacific. Christian missionaries soon followed explorers and traders. The first American missionaries arrived in Hawaii in 1820 and China in 1830, for instance. Missionaries, though, often worked alongside business interests, and American missionaries in Hawaii, for instance, obtained large tracts of land and started lucrative sugar plantations. During the nineteenth century, Hawaii was ruled by an oligarchy based on the sugar companies, together known as the "Big Five." This white American "haole" elite was extremely powerful, but they still operated outside of the formal expression of American state power.

As many Americans looked for empire across the Pacific, others looked to Latin America. The United States, long a participant in an increasingly complex network of economic, social, and cultural interactions in Latin America, entered the late-nineteenth century with a new aggressive and interventionist attitude toward its southern neighbors.

American capitalists invested enormous sums of money in Mexico during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, during the long reign of the corrupt yet stable regime of the modernization-hungry president Porfirio Díaz. But in 1910 the Mexican people revolted against Díaz, ending his authoritarian regime but also his friendliness toward the business interests of the United States. In the midst of the terrible destruction wrought by

the fighting, Americans with investment interests plead for governmental help but the United States government tried to control events and politics that could not be controlled. More and more American businessmen called for military intervention. When the brutal strongman Victoriano Huerta executed the revolutionary, democratically elected president Francisco Madero in 1913, newly inaugurated American President Woodrow Wilson put pressure on Mexico's new regime. Wilson refused to recognize the new government and demanded Huerta step aside and allow free elections take place. Huerta refused.

When Mexican forces mistakenly arrested American sailors in the port city of Tampico in April 1914, Wilson saw the opportunity to apply additional pressure on Huerta. Huerta refused to make amends, and Wilson therefore asked Congress for authority to use force against Mexico. But even before Congress could respond, Wilson invaded and took the port city of Veracruz to prevent, he said, a German shipment of arms from reaching Huerta's forces. The Huerta government fell in July 1914, and the American occupation lasted until November, when Venustiano Carranza, a rival of Huerta, took power. When Wilson threw American support behind Carranza, and not his more radical and now-rival Pancho Villa, Villa and several hundred supporters attacked American interests and raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916, and killed over a dozen soldiers and civilians. Wilson ordered a punitive expedition of several thousand soldiers led by General

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John J. “Blackjack” Pershing to enter Northern Mexico and capture Villa. But Villa eluded Pershing for nearly a year and, in 1917, with war in Europe looming and great injury done to U.S.-Mexican relations, Pershing left Mexico.

The United States’ actions during the Mexican Revolution reflected longstanding American policy that justified interventionist actions in Latin American politics because of their potential bearing on the United States: on citizens, on shared territorial borders, and perhaps most significantly, on economic investments. This particular example highlights the role of geography, or perhaps proximity, in the pursuit of imperial outcomes. But American interactions in more distant locations, in the Middle East, for instance, look quite different.

In 1867, Mark Twain traveled to the Middle East as part of a large tour group of Americans. In his satirical travelogue, *The Innocents Abroad*, he wrote, “the people [of the Middle East] stared at us everywhere, and we [Americans] stared at them. We generally made them feel rather small, too, before we got done with them, because we bore down on them with America’s greatness until we crushed them.” When Americans later intervened in the Middle East, they would do so convinced of their own superiority.

The U.S. government had traditionally had little contact with the Middle East. Trade was limited, too limited for an economic relationship to be deemed vital

to the national interest, but treaties were nevertheless signed between the U.S. and powers in the Middle East. Still, the majority of American involvement in the Middle East prior to World War I came not in the form of trade, but in education, science, and humanitarian aid. American missionaries led the way. The first Protestant missionaries had arrived in 1819. Soon the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the boards of missions of the Reformed Church of America became dominant in missionary enterprises. Missions were established in almost every country of the Middle East, and even though their efforts resulted in relatively few converts, missionaries helped to establish hospitals and schools and their work laid the foundation for the establishment of western-style universities, such as Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey (1863), the American University of Beirut (1866), and the American University of Cairo (1919).

### III. 1898

Although the United States had a long history of international economic, military, and cultural engagement that stretched back deep into the eighteenth century, the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars (1898-1902) marked a crucial turning point in American interventions abroad. In pursuing war with Spain, and then engaging in counterrevolutionary conflict in the Philippines, the United States expanded the scope and strength of its global reach. Over the next two decades, the U.S. would become increasingly involved



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in international politics, particularly in Latin America. These new conflicts and ensuing territorial problems forced Americans to confront the ideological elements of imperialism. Should the United States act as an empire? Or were foreign interventions and the taking of territory antithetical to its founding democratic ideals? What exactly would be the relationship between the US and its territories? And could colonial subjects be successfully and safely incorporated into the body politic as American citizens? The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars brought these questions, which had always lurked behind discussions of American expansion, out into the open.

In 1898, Americans began in earnest to turn their attention southward to problems plaguing their neighbor Cuba. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Cubans had tried unsuccessfully again and again to gain independence from Spain. The latest uprising, and the one that would prove fatal to Spain's colonial designs, began in 1895 and was still raging in the winter of 1898. By that time, in an attempt to crush the uprising, Spanish general Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau had been conducting a policy of reconcentration—forcing Cubans living in certain cities to relocate en masse to military camps—for about two years. Prominent newspaper publishers sensationalized Spanish atrocities. Cubans in the United States and their allies raised cries of *Cuba Libre!* And While the United States government proclaimed a wish to avoid armed conflict with Spain, President McKinley became increasingly concerned



Uncle Sam, loaded with implements of modern civilization, uses the Philippines as a stepping-stone to get across the Pacific to China (represented by a small man with open arms), who excitedly awaits Sam's arrival. With the expansionist policy gaining greater traction, the possibility for more imperialistic missions (including to conflict-ridden China) seemed strong. The cartoon might be arguing that such endeavors are worthwhile, bringing education, technological, and other civilizing tools to a desperate people. On the other hand, it could be read as sarcastically commenting on America's new propensity to "step" on others. "AND, AFTER ALL, THE PHILIPPINES ARE ONLY THE STEPPING-STONE TO CHINA," in *Judge Magazine*, 1900 or 1902. [Wikimedia](#).

about the safety of American lives and property in Cuba. He ordered the battleship *Maine* to Havana harbor in January 1898.

The *Maine* sat undisturbed in the harbor for about two weeks. Then, on the evening of February 15, a titanic explosion tore open the ship and sent it to the bottom of the ocean. Three-quarters of the ship's 354 occupants died. A naval board of inquiry immediately began an investigation to ascertain the cause of the explosion, but the loudest Americans had already decided that Spanish treachery was to blame. Capitalizing on the outrage, "yellow journals"—newspapers that promoted sensational

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stories, notoriously at the cost of accuracy—such as William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* called for war with Spain. When urgent negotiations failed to produce a mutually agreeable settlement, Congress officially declared war on April 25.

Although America’s war effort began haphazardly, Spain’s decaying military crumbled. Military victories for the United States came quickly. In the Pacific, on May 1, Commodore George Dewey engaged the Spanish fleet outside of Manila, the capital of the Philippines (another Spanish colonial possession), destroyed it, and proceeded to blockade Manila harbor. Two months later, American troops took Cuba’s San Juan Heights in what would become the most well-known battle of the war, winning fame not for regular soldiers but for the irregular, particularly Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders. Roosevelt had been the Assistant Secretary of the Navy but had resigned his position in order to see action in the war. His actions in Cuba made him a national celebrity. As disease began to eat away at American troops, the Spanish suffered the loss of Santiago de Cuba on July 17, effectively ending the war. The two nations agreed to a cease-fire on August 12 and formally signed the Treaty of Paris in December. The terms of the treaty stipulated, among other things, that the United States would acquire Spain’s former holdings of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Secretary of State John Hay memorably referred to the conflict as a “splendid little war,” and at the

time it certainly appeared that way. Fewer than four hundred Americans died in battle in a war that lasted about fifteen weeks. Contemporaries celebrated American victories as the providential act of God. The influential Brooklyn minister Lyman Abbott, for instance, declared that Americans were “an elect people of God” and saw divine providence in Dewey’s victory at Manila. Some, such as Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, took matters one step further, seeing in American victory an opportunity for imperialism. In his view, America had a “mission to perform” and a “duty to discharge” around the world. What Beveridge envisioned was nothing less than an American empire.

But the question of whether the United States *should* become an empire was sharply debated across the nation in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of Hawaii in July 1898. At the behest of American businessmen who had overthrown the Hawaiian monarchy, the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands and their rich plantations. Between Hawaii and a number of former Spanish possessions, many Americans coveted the economic and political advantages that increased territory would bring. Those opposed to expansion, however, worried that imperial ambitions did not accord with the nation’s founding ideals. American actions in the Philippines brought all of these discussions to a head.

The Philippines were an afterthought of the Spanish-

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American War, but, when the smoke cleared, the United States found itself in possession of a key foothold in the Pacific. After Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay, conversations about how to proceed occupied the attentions of President McKinley, political leaders from both parties, and the popular press. American forces and Philippine forces (under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo) were in communication: would the Americans offer their support to the Filipinos and their ongoing efforts against the Spanish? Or would the Americans replace the Spanish as a colonial occupying force? American forces were instructed to secure Manila without allowing Philippine forces to enter the Walled City (the seat of the Spanish colonial government), hinting, perhaps, at things to come. Americans wondered what would happen next. Perhaps a good many ordinary Americans shared the bewildered sentiments of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Irish-American barkeeper whom humorist Finley Peter Dunne used to satirize American life: "I don't know what to do with th' Ph'lippeens anny more thin I did las' summer, before I heerd tell iv thim... We can't sell thim, we can't ate thim, an' we can't throw thim into the th' alley whin no wan is lookin'."

As debates about American imperialism continued against the backdrop of an upcoming presidential election, tensions in the Philippines escalated. Emilio Aguinaldo was inaugurated as president of the First Philippine Republic (or Malolos Republic) in late January of 1899; fighting between American and



*A propagandistic image, this political cartoon shows a before and after: the Spanish colonies before intervention by America and those same former colonies after. The differences are obvious and exaggerated, with the top figures described as "oppressed" by the weight of industrial slavery until America "rescued" them, thereby turning them into the respectable and successful businessmen seen on the bottom half. Those who claimed that American imperialism brought civilization and prosperity to destitute peoples used visuals like these, as well as photographic and textual evidence, to support their beliefs. "What the United States has Fought For," in Chicago Tribune, 1914. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Free\\_from\\_Spanish.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Free_from_Spanish.jpg).*

Philippine forces began in early February; and in April 1899, Congress ratified the 1898 Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Spanish-American War and gave Spain twenty million dollars in exchange for the Philippine Islands.

Like the Cubans, Filipinos had waged a long war against their Spanish colonizers. The United States could have given them the independence they had

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long fought for, but, instead, at the behest of President William McKinley, the United States occupied the islands and from 1899-1902 waged a bloody series of conflicts against Filipino insurrectionists that cost far more lives than the war with Spain. Under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipinos who had fought for freedom against the Spanish now fought for freedom against the very nation that had claimed to have liberated them from Spanish tyranny.

The Philippine Insurrection, or the Philippine-American War, was a brutal conflict of occupation and insurgency. Contemporaries compared the guerrilla-style warfare in challenging and unfamiliar terrain to the American experiences in the Indian Wars of the late-nineteenth-century. Many commented on its brutality and the uncertain mission of American troops. An April 1899 dispatch from a *Harper's Weekly* correspondent began, "A week has passed—a week of fighting and marching, of jungles and rivers, of incident and adventure so varied and of so rapid transition that to sit down to write about it makes one feel as if he were trying to describe a dream where time, space, and all the logical sequences of ordinary life are upset in the unrelenting brutality of war."

John Bass described his experiences in detail, and his reportage, combined with accounts that came directly from soldiers, helped to shape public knowledge about the war. Reports of cruelty on both sides and a few high profile military investigations ensured continued public attention to events across the Pacific.



*Tailor President McKinley measures an obese Uncle Sam for larger clothing, while Anti-Expansionists like Joseph Pulitzer unsuccessfully offer Sam a weight-loss elixir. As the nation increased its imperialistic presence and mission, many like Pulitzer worried that America would grow too big for its own good. John S. Pughe, "Declined With Thanks," in Puck (September 5, 1900). Wikimedia, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:McKinleyNationalExpansionUncleSamPulitzer.jpg>.*

Amidst fighting to secure the Philippine Islands, the federal government sent two Philippine Commissions to assess the situation in the islands and make recommendations for a civilian colonial government. A civilian administration, with William H. Taft as the first Governor General (1901-1903), was established with military support. Although President Theodore Roosevelt declared the war to be over in 1902, resistance and occasional fighting continued into the second decade of the twentieth century.

Debates about American imperialism dominated headlines and tapped into core ideas about American identity and the proper role of the United States in the larger world. Should a former colony, established on the principles of freedom, liberty, and sovereignty, become a colonizer itself? What was imperialism, anyway? Many framed the Filipino conflict as a



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Protestant, civilizing mission. Others framed American imperialism in the Philippines as nothing new, as simply the extension of a never-ending westward American expansion. It was simply destiny. Some saw imperialism as a way to reenergize the nation by asserting national authority and power around the globe. Others baldly recognized the opportunities the Philippine Islands presented for access to Asian markets. But critics grew loud. The American Anti-Imperialist League, founded in 1899 and populated by such prominent Americans as Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, and Jane Addams, protested American imperial actions and articulated a platform that decried foreign subjugation and upheld the rights of all to self-governance. Still others embraced anti-imperialist stances because of concerns about immigration and American racial identity, afraid that American purity stood imperiled by contact with strange and foreign peoples. For whatever reason, however, the onset or acceleration of imperialism was a controversial and landmark moment in American history. America had become a preeminent force in the world.

### IV. Theodore Roosevelt and American Imperialism

Under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt, the United States emerged from the nineteenth century with ambitious designs on global power through military might, territorial expansion, and economic influence. Though the Spanish-American War had begun under the administration of William

McKinley, Roosevelt, the hero of San Juan Hill, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Vice-President, and President, was arguably the most visible and influential proponent of American imperialism at the turn of the century. Roosevelt's emphasis on developing the American navy, and on Latin America as a key strategic area of U.S. foreign policy, would have long-term consequences.

In return for Roosevelt's support of the Republican nominee, William McKinley, in the 1896 presidential election, McKinley appointed Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. The head of the department, John Long, had a competent but lackadaisical managerial style that allowed Roosevelt a great deal of freedom that Roosevelt used to network with such luminaries as military theorists Alfred Thayer Mahan and naval officer George Dewey and politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge and William Howard Taft. During his tenure he oversaw the construction of new battleships, the implementation of new technology, and laid the groundwork for new shipyards, all with the goal of projecting America's power across the oceans. Roosevelt wanted to expand American influence. For instance, he advocated for the annexation of Hawaii for several reasons: it was within the American sphere of influence, it would deny Japanese expansion and limit potential threats to the West Coast, it had an excellent port for battleships at Pearl Harbor, and it would act as a fueling station on the way to pivotal markets in Asia.



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Roosevelt, after winning headlines in the war, ran as Vice President under McKinley and rose to the presidency after McKinley's assassination by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901. Among his many interventions in American life, Roosevelt acted with vigor to expand the military, bolstering naval power especially, to protect and promote American interests abroad. This included the construction of eleven battleships between 1904 and 1907. Alfred Thayer Mahan's naval theories, described in his *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, influenced Roosevelt a great deal. In contrast to theories that advocated for commerce raiding, coastal defense and small "brown water" ships, the imperative to control the sea required battleships and a "blue water" navy that could engage and win decisive battles with rival fleets. As president, Roosevelt continued the policies he established as Assistant Naval Secretary and expanded the U.S. fleet. The mission of the Great White Fleet, sixteen all-white battleships that sailed around the world between 1907 and 1909, exemplified America's new power.

Roosevelt insisted that the "big stick" and the persuasive power of the U.S. military could assure U.S. hegemony over strategically important regions in the Western Hemisphere. The United States used military intervention in various circumstances to further its objectives, but it did not have the ability nor the inclination to militarily impose its will on the entirety of South and Central America. The United States therefore more often used informal methods of



Teddy Roosevelt, a politician turned soldier, gained fame (and perhaps infamy) after he and his "Rough Riders" took San Juan Hill. Images like the poster praised Roosevelt and the battle as Americans celebrated this "splendid little war." "William H. West's Big Minstrel Jubilee," 1899. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_minstrel_jubilee_rough_riders.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West\\_minstrel\\_jubilee\\_rough\\_riders.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_minstrel_jubilee_rough_riders.jpg).

empire, such as so-called "dollar diplomacy," to assert dominance over the hemisphere.

The United States actively intervened again and again in Latin America. Throughout his time in office, Roosevelt exerted U.S. control over Cuba (even after it gained formal independence in 1902) and Puerto Rico, and he deployed naval forces to ensure Panama's independence from Colombia in 1901 in order to acquire a U.S. Canal Zone. Furthermore, Roosevelt pronounced the "Roosevelt Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904, proclaiming U.S. police power in the Caribbean. As articulated by President James Monroe in his annual address to Congress in 1823, the United States would treat any military intervention in Latin America by a European power as a threat to American security. Roosevelt reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine and expanded it by declaring

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that the U.S. had the right to preemptive action through intervention in any Latin American nation in order to correct administrative and fiscal deficiencies.

Roosevelt's policy justified numerous and repeated police actions in "dysfunctional" Caribbean and Latin American countries by U.S. marines and naval forces and enabled the founding of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. This approach is sometimes referred to as "gunboat diplomacy," wherein naval forces and marines land in a national capital to protect American and Western personnel, temporarily seize control of the government, and dictate policies friendly to American business, such as the repayment of foreign loans. For example, in 1905 Roosevelt sent the marines to occupy the Dominican Republic and established financial supervision over the Dominican government. Imperialists often framed such actions as almost humanitarian. They celebrated white Anglo-Saxon societies such as found in the United States and the British Empire as advanced practitioners of nation-building and civilization, helping to uplift debtor nations in Latin America that lacked the manly qualities of discipline and self-control. Roosevelt, for instance, preached that it was the "manly duty" of the United States to exercise an international police power in the Caribbean and to spread the benefits of Anglo-Saxon civilization to inferior states populated by inferior peoples. The president's language, for instance, contrasted debtor nation's "impotence" with the United States' civilizing influence, belying new ideas that associated self-restraint and social stability with Anglo-Saxon manliness.

Dollar diplomacy offered a less costly method of empire and avoided the troubles of military occupation. Washington worked with bankers to provide loans to Latin American nations in exchange for some level of control over their national fiscal affairs. Roosevelt first implemented dollar diplomacy on a vast scale, while Presidents Taft and Wilson continued the practice in various forms during their own administrations. All confronted instability in Latin America. Rising debts to European and American bankers allowed for the inroads of modern life but destabilized much of the region. Bankers, beginning with financial houses in London and New York, saw Latin America as an opportunity for investment. Lenders took advantage of the region's newly formed governments' need for cash and exacted punishing interest rates on massive loans, which were then sold off in pieces on the secondary bond market. American economic interests were now closely aligned with the region, but also further undermined by the chronic instability of the region's newly formed governments, which were often plagued by mismanagement, civil wars, and military coups in the decades following their independence. Turnover in regimes interfered with the repayment of loans, as new governments would often repudiate the national debt or force a renegotiation with suddenly powerless lenders.

Creditors could not force settlements of loans until they successfully lobbied their own governments to get involved and forcibly collect debts. The Roosevelt

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administration did not want to deny the Europeans' rightful demands of repayment of debt, but it also did not want to encourage European policies of conquest in the hemisphere as part of that debt collection. U.S. policy makers and military strategists within the Roosevelt administration determined that this European practice of military intervention posed a serious threat to American interests in the region. Roosevelt reasoned that the U.S. must create and maintain fiscal and political stability within strategically important nations in Latin America, particularly those affecting routes to and from the proposed Panama Canal. As a result, U.S. policy makers considered intervention in places like Cuba and the Dominican Republic a necessity to insure security around the region.

The Monroe Doctrine provided the Roosevelt administration with a diplomatic and international legal tradition through which it could assert a U.S. right and obligation to intervene in the hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine asserted that the United States wished to promote stable, prosperous states in Latin America that could live up to their political and financial obligations. Roosevelt declared that “wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may finally require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the United States cannot ignore this duty.” President Monroe declared what

Europeans could not do in the Western Hemisphere; Roosevelt inverted his doctrine to legitimize direct U.S. intervention in the region.

Though aggressive and bellicose, Roosevelt did not necessarily advocate expansion by military force. In fact, the president insisted that in dealings with the Latin American nations, he did not seek national glory or expansion of territory and believed that war or intervention should be a last resort when resolving conflicts with problematic governments. According to Roosevelt, such actions were necessary to maintain “order and civilization.” Then again, Roosevelt certainly believed in using military power to protect national interests and spheres of influence when absolutely necessary. He also believed that the American sphere included not only Hawaii and the Caribbean, but also much of the Pacific. When Japanese victories over Russia threatened the regional balance of power he sponsored peace talks between Russian and Japanese leaders, earning him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1906.

## V. Women and Imperialism

Debates over American imperialism revolved around more than just politics and economics and national self-interest. They also included notions of humanitarianism, morality, religion, and ideas of “civilization.” And they included significant participation by American women.

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In the fall of 1903, Margaret McLeod, age twenty-one, originally of Boston, found herself in Australia on family business and in need of income. Fortuitously, she made the acquaintance of Alexander MacWillie, the top salesman for the H. J. Heinz Company, who happened to be looking for a young lady to serve as a “demonstrator” of Heinz products to potential consumers. McLeod proved to be such an attractive purveyor of India relish and baked beans that she accompanied MacWillie on the rest of his tour of Australia and continued on to South Africa, India, and Japan. Wherever she went, this “dainty young girl with golden hair in white cap and tucker” drew attention to Heinz’s products, but, in a much larger sense, she was also projecting an image of middle-class American domesticity, of pure womanhood. Heinz saw itself not only as purveying economical and healthful foodstuffs—it was bringing the blessings of civilization to the world.

When commentators, such as Theodore Roosevelt in his speech on “the strenuous life,” spoke about America’s overseas ventures, they generally gave the impression that this was a strictly masculine enterprise—the work of soldiers, sailors, government officials, explorers, businessmen, and scientists. But in fact, U.S. imperialism, focused as much on economic and cultural influence as military or political power, offered a range of opportunities for white, middle-class, Christian women. In addition to working as representatives of American business,

women could serve as missionaries, teachers, and medical professionals, and as artists and writers they were inspired by, and helped to transmit, ideas about imperialism.

Moreover, the rhetoric of civilization that underlay imperialism was itself a highly gendered concept. According to the racial theory of the day, humans progressed through hierarchical stages of civilization in an orderly, linear fashion. Only Europeans and Americans had attained the highest level of civilization, which was superficially marked by whiteness but also included an industrial economy and a gender division in which men and women had diverging but complementary roles. Social and technological progress had freed women of the burdens of physical labor and elevated them to a position of moral and spiritual authority. White women thus potentially had important roles to play in U.S. imperialism, both as symbols of the benefits of American civilization and as vehicles for the transmission of American values.

It is also important to note that civilization, while often cloaked in the language of morality and Christianity, was very much an economic concept. The stages of civilization were primarily marked by their economic character (hunter-gatherer, agricultural, industrial), and the consumption of industrially produced commodities was seen as a key moment in “savages” progress toward civilized life. Over the course of the nineteenth century, women in the West, for instance, had become



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closely associated with consumption, particularly of those commodities used in the domestic sphere. Thus it must have seemed natural for Alexander MacWillie to hire Margaret McLeod to “demonstrate” catsup and chili sauce at the same time as she “demonstrated” white, middle-class domesticity. By adopting the use of such progressive products in their homes, consumers could potentially absorb even the virtues of American civilization.

In some ways, women’s work in support of imperialism can be seen as an extension of the kind of activities many of them were already engaged in among working-class, immigrant, and Native American communities in the United States. Many white women felt that they had a duty to spread the benefits of Christian civilization to those less fortunate than themselves. American overseas ventures, then, merely expanded the scope of these activities—literally, in that the geographical range of possibilities encompassed practically the entire globe, and figuratively, in that imperialism significantly raised the stakes of women’s work. No longer only responsible for shaping the next generation of American citizens, white women now had a crucial role to play in the maintenance of civilization itself. They too would help determine whether civilization would continue to progress.

Of course, not all women were active supporters of U.S. imperialism. Many actively opposed it. Although the most prominent public voices against imperialism



*With great self-assurance of how she looks in her new hat, Columbia puts on her “Easter Bonnet” shaped as a warship labelled “World Power.” By 1901, when this political cartoon was published, Americans were feeling rather confident in their position as a world leader. Ehrhart after sketch by Dalrymple, “Columbia’s Easter bonnet”, in Puck (April 6, 1901). [Wikimedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Puck\\_cover2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Puck_cover2.jpg).*

were male, women made up a large proportion of the membership of organizations like the Anti-Imperialist League. For white women like Jane Addams and Josephine Shaw Lowell, anti-imperialist activism was an outgrowth of their work in opposition to violence and in support of democracy. Black female activists, meanwhile, generally viewed imperialism as a form of racial antagonism and drew parallels between the



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treatments of African-Americans at home and, for example, Filipinos abroad. Indeed, Ida B. Wells viewed her anti-lynching campaign as a kind of anti-imperialist activism.

## VI. Immigration

For Americans at the turn of the century, imperialism and immigration were two sides of the same coin. The involvement of American women with imperialist and anti-imperialist activity demonstrates how foreign policy concerns were brought home and became, in a sense, domesticated. It is also no coincidence that many of the women involved in both imperialist and anti-imperialist organizations were also very much concerned with the plight of new arrivals to the United States. Industrialization, imperialism, and immigration were all linked. Imperialism had at its core a desire for markets for American goods, and those goods were increasingly manufactured by immigrant labor. This sense of growing dependence on “others” as producers and consumers, along with doubts about their capability of assimilation into the mainstream of white, Protestant American society, caused a great deal of anxiety among native-born Americans.

Between 1870 and 1920, over twenty-five million immigrants arrived in the United States. This migration was largely a continuation of a process begun before the Civil War, though, by the turn of the twentieth century, new groups such as Italians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews made up a larger

percentage of the arrivals while Irish and German numbers began to dwindle. This massive movement of people to the United States was influenced by a number of causes, or “push” and “pull” factors. In other words, certain conditions in their home countries encouraged people to leave, while other factors encouraged them to choose the United States for their destination. For example, a young husband and wife living in Sweden in the 1880s and unable to purchase farmland might read an advertisement for inexpensive land in the American Midwest and choose to sail to the United States. Or a Russian Jewish family, eager to escape brutal attacks sanctioned by the Czar, looked to the United States as a land of freedom. Or perhaps a Japanese migrant might hear of the fertile land and choose to sail for California. Thus, there were a number of factors (hunger, lack of land, military conscription, and religious persecution) that served to push people out of their home countries. Meanwhile, the United States offered a number of possibilities that made it an appealing destination for these migrants.

The most important factor drawing immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1920 was the maturation of American capitalism into large industrial complexes producing goods such as steel, textiles, and food products, replacing smaller and more local workshops. The influx of immigrants, alongside a large movement of Americans from the countryside to the city, helped propel the rapid growth of cities like New York, Pittsburgh,

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Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. By 1890, in most large northern cities, immigrants and their children amounted to 60 percent of the population, sometimes reaching as high as 80 or 90 percent. Many immigrants, particularly those from Italy or the Balkans, hoped to return home with enough money to purchase land. But those who stayed faced many challenges. How did American immigrants adjust to their new homes? Did the new arrivals join a “melting pot” and simply become just like those people already in the United States? Or did they retain – and even strengthen – their ethnic identities, creating a more pluralistic society? The answer lies somewhere in the middle.

New immigrant groups formed vibrant societies and organizations to ease the transition to their new home. Some examples include Italian workmen’s clubs, Eastern European Jewish mutual-aid societies, and Polish Catholic churches. These organizations provided cultural space for immigrants to maintain their arts, languages, and traditions. Moreover, these organizations attracted even more immigrants. Thus new arrivals came directly to American cities where they knew they would find someone from their home country and perhaps even from their home village or family.

Although the growing United States economy needed large numbers of immigrant workers for its factories and mills, many Americans reacted negatively to the arrival of so many immigrants. Nativists opposed



Nativist sentiment intensified in the late nineteenth century as immigrants streamed into American cities to fuel the factory boom. “Uncle Sam’s Lodging House” conveys this anti-immigrant attitude, with caricatured representations of Europeans, Asians, and African Americans creating a chaotic scene. Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, “Uncle Sam’s lodging-house,” in *Puck* (June 7, 1882). [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_F.\\_Keppler\\_-\\_Uncle\\_Sam%27s\\_lodging-house.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_F._Keppler_-_Uncle_Sam%27s_lodging-house.jpg).

mass immigration for various reasons. Some felt that the new arrivals were unfit for American democracy, and that Irish or Italian immigrants used violence or bribery to corrupt municipal governments. Others (often earlier immigrants themselves) worried that the arrival of even more immigrants would result in fewer jobs and lower wages. Such fears combined and resulted in anti-Chinese protests on the West Coast in the 1870s. Still others worried that immigrants brought with them radical ideas such as socialism and communism. These fears multiplied after the Chicago Haymarket affair in 1886, in which immigrants were accused of killing police officers in a bomb blast.

In September 1876, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, a member of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities, gave an address in support of the introduction of regulatory federal immigration

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legislation at an interstate conference of charity officials in Saratoga, New York. Immigration might bring some benefits, but “it also introduces disease, ignorance, crime, pauperism and idleness.” Sanborn thus advocated federal action to stop “indiscriminate and unregulated immigration.”

Sanborn’s address was aimed at restricting only the immigration of paupers from Europe to the East Coast, but the idea of immigration restrictions were common across the United States in the late nineteenth century, when many variously feared that the influx of foreigners would undermine the racial, economic, and moral integrity of American society. From the 1870s to the 1920s, the federal government passed a series of laws limiting or discontinuing the immigration of particular groups and the United States remained committed to regulating the kind of immigrants who would join American society. To critics, regulations legitimized racism, class bias, and ethnic prejudice as formal national policy.

The first move for federal immigration control came from California, where racial hostility toward Chinese immigrants had mounted since the mid-nineteenth century. In addition to accusing Chinese immigrants of racial inferiority and unfitness for American citizenship, opponents claimed that they were also economically and morally corrupting American society with cheap labor and immoral practices, such as prostitution. Immigration restriction was necessary for the “Caucasian race of California,”



*The idea of America as a “melting pot,” a metaphor common in today’s parlance, was a way of arguing for the ethnic assimilation of all immigrants into a nebulous “American” identity at the turn of the 20th century. A play of the same name premiered in 1908 to great acclaim, causing even the former president Theodore Roosevelt to tell the playwright, “That’s a great play, Mr. Zangwill, that’s a great play.” Cover of Theater Programme for Israel Zangwill’s play “The Melting Pot”, 1916. [Wikimedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The-Meltingpot1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The-Meltingpot1.jpg).*

as one anti-Chinese politician declared, and for European Americans to “preserve and maintain their homes, their business, and their high social and moral position.” In 1875, the anti-Chinese crusade in California moved Congress to pass the Page Act, which banned the entry of convicted criminals, Asian laborers brought involuntarily, and women imported

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“for the purposes of prostitution,” a stricture designed chiefly to exclude Chinese women. Then, in May 1882, Congress suspended the immigration of all Chinese laborers with the Chinese Exclusion Act, making the Chinese the first immigrant group subject to admission restrictions on the basis of race. They became the first illegal immigrants. (Jackson, *Virtues*.)

On the other side of the country, Atlantic seaboard states also facilitated the formation of federal immigration policy. Since the colonial period, East Coast states had regulated immigration through their own passenger laws, which prohibited the landing of destitute foreigners unless shipmasters prepaid certain amounts of money in the support of those passengers. The state-level control of pauper immigration developed into federal policy in the early 1880s. In August 1882, Congress passed the Immigration Act, denying admission to people who were not able to support themselves and those, such as paupers, people with mental illnesses, or convicted criminals, who might otherwise threaten the security of the nation.

The category of excludable people expanded continuously after 1882. In 1885, in response to American workers’ complaints about cheap immigrant labor, Congress added foreign workers migrating under labor contracts with American employers to the list of excludable people. Six years later, the federal government included people who seemed likely to become wards of the state, people with contagious diseases, and polygamists, and

made all groups of excludable people deportable. In 1903, those who would pose ideological threats to American republican democracy, such as anarchists and socialists, also became the subject of new immigration restrictions.

Many immigration critics were responding to the shifting demographics of American immigration. The center of immigrant-sending regions shifted from northern and western Europe to Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia. These “new immigrants” were poorer, spoke languages other than English, and were likely Catholic or Jewish. White Protestant Americans typically regarded them as inferior, and American immigration policy began to reflect more explicit prejudice than ever before. One restrictionist declared that these immigrants were “races with which the English-speaking people have never hitherto assimilated, and who are most alien to the great body of the people of the United States.” The increased immigration of people from Southern and Eastern Europe, such as Italians, Jews, Slavs, and Greeks, led directly to calls for tighter restrictive measures. In 1907, the immigration of Japanese laborers was practically suspended when the American and Japanese governments reached the so-called Gentlemen’s Agreement, according to which Japan would stop issuing passports to working-class emigrants. In its 42-volume report of 1911, the United States Immigration Commission highlighted the impossibility of incorporating these new immigrants into American society. The report highlighted their



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supposed innate inferiority, asserting that they were the causes of rising social problems in America, such as poverty, crime, prostitution, and political radicalism.

The assault against immigrants' Catholicism provides an excellent example of the challenges immigrant groups faced in the United States. By 1900, Catholicism in the United States had grown dramatically in size and diversity, from one percent of the population a century earlier to the largest religious denomination in America (though still outnumbered by Protestants as a whole). As a result, Catholics in America faced two intertwined challenges, one external, related to Protestant anti-Catholicism, and the other internal, having to do with the challenges of assimilation.

Externally, the Church and its members remained an “outsider” religion in a nation that continued to see itself as culturally and religiously Protestant. Torrents of anti-Catholic literature and scandalous rumors maligned Catholics. Many Protestants doubted whether Catholics could ever make loyal Americans because they supposedly owed primary allegiance to the Pope.

Internally, Catholics in America faced the question every immigrant group has had to answer: to what extent should they become more like native-born Americans? This question was particularly acute, as Catholics encompassed a variety of languages

and customs. Beginning in the 1830s, Catholic immigration to the U.S. had exploded with the increasing arrival of Irish and German immigrants. Subsequent Catholic arrivals from Italy, Poland, and other Eastern European countries chafed at Irish dominance over the Church hierarchy. Mexican and Mexican American Catholics, whether recent immigrants or incorporated into the nation after the Mexican American War, expressed similar frustrations. Could all these different Catholics remain part of the same church?

Catholic clergy approached this situation from a variety of perspectives. Some bishops advocated rapid assimilation into the English-speaking mainstream. These “Americanists” advocated an end to “ethnic parishes”—the unofficial practice of permitting separate congregations for Poles, Italians, Germans, etc.—in the belief that such isolation only delayed immigrants' entry into the American mainstream. They anticipated that the Catholic Church could thrive in a nation that espoused religious freedom, if only they assimilated. Meanwhile, however, more conservative clergy cautioned against assimilation. While they conceded that the U.S. had no official religion, they felt that Protestant notions of the separation of church and state and of licentious individual liberty posed a threat to the Catholic faith. They further saw ethnic parishes as an effective strategy protecting immigrant communities and worried that Protestants would use public schools to attack the Catholic faith. Eventually, the head of



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the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIII, weighed in on the controversy. In 1899, he sent a special letter (an encyclical) to an archbishop in the United States. Leo reminded the Americanists that the Catholic Church was a unified global body and that American liberties did not give Catholics the freedom to alter church teachings. The Americanists denied any such intention, but the conservative clergy claimed that the Pope had sided with them. Tension between Catholicism and American life, however, would continue well into the twentieth century.

The American encounter with Catholicism—and Catholicism’s encounter with America—testified to the tense relationship between native-born and foreign-born Americans, and to the larger ideas Americans used to situate themselves in a larger world, a world of empire and immigrants.

## VII. Conclusion

While American imperialism flared most brightly for a relatively brief time at the turn of the century, new imperial patterns repeated old practices and lived on into the twentieth century. But suddenly the United States had embraced its cultural, economic, and religious influence in the world, along with a new-found military power, to exercise varying degrees of control over nations and peoples. Whether as formal subjects or unwilling partners on the receiving end of Roosevelt’s “big stick,” those who experienced U.S. expansionist policies confronted new American

ambitions. At home, debates over immigration and imperialism drew attention to the interplay of international and domestic policy, and the ways in which imperial actions, practices, and ideas affected and were affected by domestic questions. How Americans thought about the conflict in the Philippines, for example, was affected by how they approached about immigration in their own cities. And at the turn of the century, those thoughts were very much on the minds of Americans.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# UNIT 4

## TIMELINE

| A Timeline of Politics and Foreign Affairs of the Late 19th Century: 1867-1920 |   |
|--|---|
| 1867   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grange founded.</li> <li>Rutherford B. Hayes elected president.</li> </ul>   |
| 1878   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bland-Allison Act passed by Congress, authorizing the coining of silver dollars.</li> </ul>  |
| 1880   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Republican, <b>James Garfield</b>, elected president.</li> </ul>   |
| 1881   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Republican, <b>Chester A. Arthur</b>, became president after Garfield died.</li> </ul>   |
| 1883   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Railroads divide the country into four time zones.</li> </ul>  |
| 1884   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democrat, <b>Grover Cleveland</b>, elected president.</li> </ul>   |
| 1887   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Interstate Commerce Act</b> passed by Congress, making the ICC the first federal-level regulatory commission.</li> </ul>  |
| 1888   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Republican, <b>Benjamin Harrison</b>, elected president.</li> </ul>  |
| 1890   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silver Purchase Act</b> passed by Congress, increasing the amount of silver the government had to buy.</li> <li><b>Sherman Antitrust Act</b> passed by Congress, ending trusts and empowering Congress to regulate interstate commerce.</li> <li><b>McKinley Tariff</b> passed.</li> <li><b>National American Woman Suffrage Association</b> formed and Wyoming allowed women to vote in national elections.</li> </ul> |
| 1891   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Populist Party (People's Party)</b> formed.</li> </ul>  |
| 1892   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibition movement started.</li> </ul>   |
| 1893   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Federation of Miners formed.</li> </ul>  |
| 1894   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coxey's "army" marches to Washington, D.C.</li> </ul>  |
| 1895   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Venezuelan Border Crisis</b> between British Guiana and Venezuela. First time Great Britain backed down from US assertion of <b>Monroe Doctrine</b> in Western Hemisphere.</li> </ul>   |

# UNIT 4

## TIMELINE

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|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1896 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>William McKinley</b> elected president.</li></ul>  |
| 1897 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Eugene V. Debs</b> became leader of the Social Democratic Party.</li></ul>   |
| 1898 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In April, the <b>Spanish-American War</b> broke out, lasting 144 days, and, under the Treaty of Paris, giving the US control over Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.</li><li>• Hawaii annexed.</li></ul> |
| 1899 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secretary of State <b>John Hay</b> initiates <b>Open Door Policy</b> in China; Boxer uprising starts, and guerrilla war started in the Philippines.</li></ul>   |
| 1900 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• William McKinley reelected president, and Congress puts the US dollar on the <b>Gold Standard</b>.</li></ul>  |
| 1901 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boxer Protocol imposed by western powers on Chinese government.</li></ul>   |
| 1906 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>Hepburn Act</b> is passed by Congress, allowing Interstate Commerce Commission to set maximum railroad rates.</li></ul>  |
| 1920 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women receive the right to vote.</li></ul>  |

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## Progressive Era in Theme Analysis

At the end of the 19th century, an intense call came from various classes, in particular, for social and economic reforms led and financed by the federal government. By the early 20th century, reformers were more organized and drew more support from the upper and middle classes. Collectively known as the progressives, such persons led the charge to expand the powers of the central government domestically, while also promoting US regional and international interests. This is a significant time per seeing the theme of the class advance, particularly domestically in terms of the power of government (at all levels).

## Background to Progressivism

1. The Populist movement - was the forerunner of the reforms that Progressives embraced. The Progressives picked up where the Populists left off.
2. Industrialization had brought on great economic and technological changes that benefited the nation. However, it also took a large toll on humanity. The idea of America as the “land of opportunity” was largely a myth for most people, who spent their, on average short, lives living in slums and working in harsh and unsafe conditions.

## Nature of Progressivism Points to Consider

1. Progressivism was not one specific movement, but rather many different ones, with similar ideas on how to bring about reforms.
2. Progressives, seeing that the era’s social problems were too large for private philanthropic efforts, wanted government to help solve social ills. Thus, they viewed government as an ally in their reform efforts.
3. Progressivism started at the city and state levels and worked its way up to national issues, over time. A myriad of organizations, often led by middle and upper class women, pursued countless reform objectives
4. The leaders of the movement were: upper and middle class women, journalists, novelists, religious leaders, social critics, and politicians.
5. As a result of the Progressive philosophy, Washington D.C. turned into a “hotbed” of lobbyist activities.
6. Progressives valued specialization, meaning they sought out the advice of “experts” and specialists on topics related to their reform efforts. During this era, the professions were emerging. Colleges offered professional degrees in new areas of study, such as journalism and law. Professional standards for membership and certification were set by organiza-

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tions, such as the American Bar Association and American Medical Association. Progressives wanted to see specialists working in the bureaucracy of government in order to have trained experts solving the nation's problems.

7. Despite their reform-minded attitudes, Progressives in general were not interested in civil rights for minorities or in furthering the status of women.

## The Spread of Progressivism

Investigative (a.k.a. muckraking) Journalism and the print media caused the Progressive Movement to turn into a national phenomenon. Novelists and journalists tried to disturb the sensibilities of middle class readers the seamy, ugly, and horrid details of corporate wrong-doings, municipal corruption, and the harshness of slum and factory life. The new high-speed printing and photographic reproduction techniques of the era assured that their message would reach a large audience and have an emotional impact. McClure's Magazine was the first major publication to print such stories. In the January 1903 edition Lincoln Steffens exposed readers to the corruptions in city governments. Ida Tarbell told the sordid history of Standard Oil Company, and Ray Baker highlighted the corruption and violence in labor unions. McClure's sales boomed, and other magazines and newspapers copied McClure's style of journalism in order to cash in on the popularity of such articles. (i.e. Collier's, American Magazine, and Cosmopolitan) Thus, investigative

journalism increased in the United States, and so too did reform efforts led by progressive-minded individuals.

### Areas Targeted by Progressives:

Anything in need of "reform" was the object of Progressive reform efforts. Most efforts were directed at local and state issues, but progressivism could also be found making its way to the national level.

### State Governors:

The personification of a progressive governors during the era was Wisconsin's Governor Robert LaFollette, elected in 1900. LaFollette was a reform governor, who made changes in elections to give the people a direct voice in the primary, regulated and taxed the railroads, and instituted the merit system for hiring and promoting state employees. Others followed his lead. California's governor established workmen's compensation. On the whole progressive governors: reduced the power of political machines, took measures to increase the power of the individual voter, and promoted political participation through grassroots, interest groups.

### Presidents:

Eventually, the progressive spirit worked its way up to the national level, as state politicians furthered their careers in Washington. The progressive presidents were: Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson; let's examine each.



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Theodore Roosevelt a progressive Republican became president in 1901 (after McKinley's assassination) and was elected in 1904. At 42 years old, he was the youngest president in the nation's history at the time. He had been a progressive governor of New York, whose enemies nominated him to the Vice-Presidency under McKinley, in order to move him out of New York. Roosevelt made some very progressive moves during his terms.

- “Trustbuster” - was the nickname he acquired for his active prosecution of businesses under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act
- “Strike Arbitrator” - was another title he was given, due to his “Square Deal” philosophy of dealing with labor and management equally in arbitration. In 1902, he took a drastic move in threatening to close down mines, when mine owners refused to negotiate with the United Mine Workers. It was the first time in American history that the federal government threatened to use force on management instead of labor, during disputes. In the end, the mine workers got higher wages and a 9 hour work day.
- Federal regulation of the economy occurred in his administration via anti-trust legislation, but also the Hepburn Act (1906), which allowed the Interstate Commerce Commission to establish maximum railroad rates.
- The nation's health was a concern of Roosevelt's. Having read Upton Sinclair's *The*

*Jungle*, he pushed the Pure Food and Drug (1906), which banned the sale of impure or mislabeled foods and drugs, and the Meat Inspection Act (1906), which required the federal inspection of the meat packing industry.

William Howard Taft, elected in 1898, was really a conservative Republican, but he fits into the Progressive Era because of his philosophical conviction that as president he needed to follow the exact letter of the law. This meant he would enforce the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, despite his conservative views. It was also under his administration that two progressive Constitutional amendments were passed by Congress. The 16th Amendment established the federal income tax, and the 17th Amendment instituted the direct election of senators. By the end of his administration, Taft was unpopular, and the Republican party was divided between its progressive and conservative wings. This led to the election of Democrat, Woodrow Wilson.

Woodrow Wilson, elected in 1912, was the most progressive president of the era, and the election of 1912 really stated that the country had chosen to go the direction of progressivism. Formally educated at John Hopkins in the field of political science, Wilson became an educator before running for governor of New Jersey in 1910. As governor, he adopted many progressive measures and gained the support of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. Wilson believed that the president should be an active poli-

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cy maker and as president he instituted progressive reforms.

- The Underwood Act of 1913 reduced tariffs and established the graduated income tax.
- The Federal Reserve Act of 1913 established 12 Federal Reserve Banks to hold the cash revenues of commercial banks.
- The Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914 banned monopolistic practices like: price fixing and interlocking directorates (when the board of directors of two similar companies are comprised of the same individuals), while exempting farmers organizations and labor unions from prosecution under anti-trust legislation.
- The Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914 outlawed unfair methods of competition in interstate commerce, and created a presidential-appointed commission to investigate illegal business practices.
- The Adamson Act of 1916 established an 8 hour work day on all interstate railroads.
- Wilson's social moves consisted of pressuring for a Constitutional amendment to end child labor (did not occur), the creation of the Department of Labor, and the nomination of a Jewish Progressive to the Supreme Court. However, he did nothing to end segregation of blacks or to give women suffrage.
- In 1916, Wilson won the presidency with the

promise to keep the United States out of a war in Europe.

## Progressive Era Middle Class Morality

- **Social reforms** on child labor, poverty, slums, prostitution, and the like were laden with middle class attitudes of moral superiority. The middle class set the moral tone of the nation, and expected everyone to follow its lead, despite its often unreasonable and arbitrary standards being too difficult to achieve by the average working class American. Despite its reform efforts, the middle class often blamed the poor for their own problems, arguing that such people were immoral, lazy, and inferior. Efforts to get the urban poor to conform to middle class codes of behaviors and morality were often legalized at the state and local levels. Some cities censored movies deemed immoral and restricted the unsupervised children of immigrant working class parents from watching. The middle class targeted prostitution to stop the spread of venereal diseases, while being taken in by a “white slave” hysteria that swept the nation and resulted in the Mann Act of 1910, making it illegal to take a woman across state lines for “immoral purposes.” As a result of such efforts, Red light districts were forced to shut down or become more inconspicuous.

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- **Alcohol and drugs** were another area of interest for middle class Americans. Viewing booze and drugs as a lower class moral problem, the Anti-Saloon League (formed in 1895) pushed for laws to prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Drugs were widely used in American culture. Opium was the drug of choice for many people, and morphine and heroin were also popular. Cocaine was used in products like Coca-Cola (until 1900) and the Bayer Drug Company marketed a heroin-based product in 1898. The Narcotics Act of 1914 made certain drugs illegal to sell or consume.
- The **middle class** believed that the large number of immigrants flooding the nation were the cause of urban problems. In order to control such conditions, many felt that strict restrictions were needed to keep the less desirable immigrants (namely Eastern Europeans) out of the United States. Even working class organizations such as the American Federation supported these restrictions, in order to cut down on the competition from foreign labor.
- **Nativists** considered immigrants to be the degenerates of Europe who were inferior to the native population intellectually and genetically. This attitude led many in the upper classes to embrace laws based on eugenic theories. Eugenics is defined by Webster's as the "study of methods of protecting and improv-

ing the quality of the human race by selective breeding." Under such laws some states sterilized criminals and the mentally ill. The Supreme Court upheld many of these laws in the 1920s. Thus, like with most things, the Progressive Movement for all its advances had a negative and prejudicial side to its character.

Ponder the significance of the Progressive Era in relationship to the theme of the class. What impact did the era have on the American political and social system? What aspects of today's reality are the outgrowth of progressive thinking and reforms?

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

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From an undated William Jennings Bryan campaign print, "Shall the People Rule?" [Library of Congress](#).

### I. Introduction

"Never in the history of the world was society in so terrific flux as it is right now," Jack London wrote in *Iron Heel*, his 1908 dystopian novel in which a corporate oligarchy comes to rule the United States. He wrote, "The swift changes in our industrial system are causing equally swift changes in our religious, political, and social structures. An unseen and fearful revolution is taking place in the fiber and structure of society. One can only dimly feel these things, but they are in the air, now, today."

The many problems associated with the Gilded Age—the rise of unprecedented fortunes and unprecedented poverty, controversies over imperialism, urban squalor, a near-war between capital and labor, loosening social mores, unsanitary food production, the onrush of foreign immigration, environmental destruction, and the outbreak of political radicalism—confronted Americans. Terrible forces seemed out of control and the nation seemed imperiled. Farmers and workers had been waging political war against capitalists and political conservatives for decades, but then, slowly, toward the end of the nineteenth century a new generation of middle class Americans

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interjected themselves into public life and advocated new reforms to tame the runaway world of the Gilded Age.

Widespread dissatisfaction with new trends in American society spurred the Progressive Era, named for the various “progressive” movements that attracted various constituencies around various reforms. Americans had many different ideas about how the country’s development should be managed and whose interests required the greatest protection. Reformers sought to clean up politics, black Americans continued their long struggle for civil rights, women demanded the vote with greater intensity while also demanding a more equal role in society at large, and workers demanded higher wages, safer workplaces and the union recognition that would guarantee these rights. Whatever their goals, “reform” became the word of the age, and the sum of their efforts, whatever their ultimate impact or original intentions, gave the era its name.

## II. Mobilizing for Reform

In 1911 the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in Manhattan caught fire. The doors of the factory had been chained shut to prevent employees from taking unauthorized breaks (the managers who held the keys saved themselves, but left over 200 women behind). A rickety fire ladder on the side of the building collapsed immediately. Women lined the rooftop and windows of the ten story building and jumped, landing in a “mangled,

bloody pulp.” Life nets held by firemen tore at the impact of the falling bodies. Among the onlookers, “women were hysterical, scores fainted; men wept as, in paroxysms of frenzy, they hurled themselves against the police lines.” By the time the fire burned itself out 71 workers were injured and 146 had died.

A year before, the Triangle workers had gone out on strike demanding union recognition, higher wages, and better safety conditions. Remembering their workers’ “chief value,” the owners of the factory decided that a viable fire escape and unlocked doors were too expensive and called in the city police to break up the strike. After the 1911 fire, reporter Bill Shepherd reflected, “I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike last year in which the same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer.” Former Triangle worker and labor organizer Rose Schneiderman said, “This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers... the life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred! There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if 140-odd are burned to death.” After the fire Triangle owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris were brought up on manslaughter charges. They were acquitted after less than two hours of deliberation. The outcome continued a trend in the industrializing economy that saw workers’ deaths answered with



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little punishment of the business owners responsible for such dangerous conditions. But as such tragedies mounted and working and living conditions worsened and inequality grew, it became increasingly difficult to develop justifications for this new modern order.

Events such as the Triangle Shirtwaist fire convinced many Americans of the need for reform, but the energies of activists were needed to spread a new commitment to political activism and government interference in the economy. Politicians, journalists, novelists, religious leaders, and activists all raised their voices to push Americans toward reform.

Reformers turned to books and mass-circulation magazines to publicize the plight of the nation's poor and the many corruptions endemic to the new industrial order. Journalists who exposed business practices, poverty, and corruption—labeled by Theodore Roosevelt as “Muckrakers”—aroused public demands for reform. Magazines such as *McClure's* detailed political corruption and economic malfeasance. The Muckrakers confirmed Americans' suspicions about runaway wealth and political corruption. Ray Stannard Baker, a journalist whose reports on United States Steel exposed the underbelly of the new corporate capitalism, wrote, “I think I can understand now why these exposure articles took such a hold upon the American people. It was because the country, for years, had been swept by the agitation of soap-box orators, prophets crying in the wilderness, and political campaigns based upon charges of



Photographs like this one made real the potential atrocities resulting from unsafe working conditions, as policemen place the bodies of workers burnt alive in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire into coffins. “Bodies from Washington Place fire, Mar 1911,” March 25, 1911. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98502780/>.

corruption and privilege which everyone believed or suspected had some basis of truth, but which were largely unsubstantiated.”

Journalists shaped popular perceptions of Gilded Age injustice. In 1890, New York City journalist Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, a scathing indictment of living and working conditions in the city's slums. Riis not only vividly described the squalor he saw, he documented it with photography, giving readers an unflinching view of urban poverty. Riis's book led to housing reform in New York and other cities, and helped instill the idea that society bore at least some responsibility for alleviating poverty. In 1906, Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a novel dramatizing the experiences of a Lithuanian immigrant family who moved to Chicago to work in the Stock Yards. Although Sinclair intended the novel to reveal the brutal exploitation of

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labor in the meatpacking industry, and thus to build support for the socialist movement, its major impact was to lay bare the entire process of industrialized food production. The growing invisibility of slaughterhouses and livestock production for urban consumers had enabled unsanitary and unsafe conditions. “The slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors,” wrote Sinclair, “like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory.” Sinclair’s exposé led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906.

Of course, it was not only journalists who raised questions about American society. One of the most popular novels of the nineteenth century, Edward Bellamy’s 1888 *Looking Backward*, was a national sensation. In it, a man falls asleep in Boston in 1887 and awakens in 2000 to find society radically altered. Poverty and disease and competition gave way as new industrial armies cooperated to build a utopia of social harmony and economic prosperity. Bellamy’s vision of a reformed society enthralled readers, inspired hundreds of Bellamy clubs, and pushed many young readers onto the road to reform.

***“I am aware that you called yourselves free in the nineteenth century. The meaning of the word could not then, however, have been at all what it is at present, or you certainly would not have applied it to a society of which nearly every member was in a position of galling personal***



“Home of an Italian Ragpicker.” Via Preus Museum

***dependence upon others as to the very means of life, the poor upon the rich, or employed upon employer, women upon men, children upon parents.” Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward***

But Americans were urged to action not only by books and magazines but by preachers and theologians, too. Confronted by both the benefits and the ravages of industrialization, many Americans asked themselves, “What Would Jesus Do?” In 1896, Charles Sheldon, a Congregational minister in Topeka, Kansas, published *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* The novel told the story of Henry Maxwell, a pastor in a small Midwestern town one day confronted by an unemployed migrant who criticized his congregation’s lack of concern for the poor and downtrodden. Moved by the man’s plight, Maxwell preached a series of sermons in which he asked his congregation: “Would it not be true, think you, that if every Christian in America did as Jesus would do,

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society itself, the business world, yes, the very political system under which our commercial and government activity is carried on, would be so changed that human suffering would be reduced to a minimum?" Sheldon's novel became a best seller, not only because of its story but because the book's plot connected with a new movement transforming American religion: the social gospel.

The social gospel emerged within Protestant Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century. It emphasized the need for Christians to be concerned for the salvation of society, and not simply individual souls. Instead of just caring for family or fellow church members, social gospel advocates encouraged Christians to engage society, challenge social, political, and economic structures, and help those less fortunate than themselves. Responding to the developments of the industrial revolution in America and the increasing concentration of people in urban spaces, with its attendant social and economic problems, some social gospelers went so far as to advocate a form of Christian socialism, but all urged Americans to confront the sins of their society.

One of the most notable advocates of the social gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch. After graduating from Rochester Theological Seminary, in 1886 Rauschenbusch accepted the pastorate of a German Baptist church in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City, where he was confronted by rampant crime and stark poverty, problems not adequately addressed

by the political leaders of the city. Rauschenbusch joined with fellow reformers to elect a new mayoral candidate, but he also realized that a new theological framework had to reflect his interest in society and its problems. He revived Jesus' phrase, "the Kingdom of God," claiming that it encompassed every aspect of life and made every part of society a purview of the proper Christian. Like Charles Sheldon's Rev. Maxwell, Rauschenbusch believed that every Christian, whether they were a businessperson, a politician, or stay-at-home parent, should ask themselves what they could to enact the kingdom of God on Earth.

***"The social gospel is the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified. The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him. But it has not given us an adequate understanding of the sinfulness of the social order and its share in the sins of all individuals within it. It has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion. Both our sense of sin and our faith in salvation have fallen short of the realities under its teaching. The social gospel seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience. It calls on us for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations." Wal-***

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### *ter Rauschenbush, A Theology For The Social Gospel, 1917*

Glaring blindspots persisted within the proposals of most social gospel advocates. As men, they often ignored the plight of women and thus most refused to support women's suffrage. Many were also silent on the plight of African Americans, Native Americans, and other oppressed minority groups. However, Rauschenbusch and other social gospel proponents' writings would have a profound influence upon twentieth-century American life, not only most immediately in progressive reform but later, too, inspiring Martin Luther King, Jr., for instance, to envision a "beloved community" that resembled Rauschenbusch's "Kingdom of God."

### III. Women's Movements

Reform opened new possibilities for women's activism in American public life and gave new impetus to the long campaign for women's suffrage. Much energy for women's work came from female "clubs," social organizations devoted to various purposes. Some focused on intellectual development, others emphasized philanthropic activities. Increasingly, these organizations looked outwards, to their communities, and to the place of women in the larger political sphere.

Women's clubs flourished in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In 1890s women formed

national women's club federations. Particularly significant in campaigns for suffrage and women's rights were the General Federation of Women's Clubs (formed in New York City in 1890) and the National Association of Colored Women (organized in Washington, D.C., in 1896), both of which were dominated by upper-middle-class, educated, northern women. Few of these organizations were bi-racial, a legacy of the sometimes uneasy mid-nineteenth-century relationship between socially active African Americans and white women. Rising American prejudice led many white female activists to ban inclusion of their African American sisters. The segregation of black women into distinct clubs nonetheless still produced vibrant organizations that could promise racial uplift and civil rights for all blacks, as well as equal rights for women.

Other women worked through churches and moral reform organizations to clean up American life. And still others worked as moral vigilantes. The fearsome Carrie A. Nation, an imposing woman who believed she worked God's will, won headlines for destroying saloons. In Wichita, Kansas, on December 27, 1900, Nation took a hatchet and broke bottles and bars at the luxurious Carey Hotel. Arrested and charged with \$3000 in damages, Nation spent a month in jail before the county dismissed the charges on account of "a delusion to such an extent as to be practically irresponsible." But Nation's "hatchetation" drew national attention. Describing herself as "a bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what He



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doesn't like," she continued her assaults, and days later smashed two more Wichita bars.

Few women followed in Nation's footsteps, and many more worked within more reputable organizations. Nation, for instance, had founded a chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (WCTU) but the organizations' leaders described her as "unwomanly and unchristian." The WCTU was founded in 1874 as a modest temperance organization devoted to combating the evils of drunkenness. But then, from 1879 to 1898, Frances Willard invigorated the organization by transforming it into a national political organization, embracing a "do everything" policy that adopted any and all reasonable reforms that would improve social welfare and advance women's rights. Temperance, and then the full prohibition of alcohol, however, always loomed large.

Many American reformers associated alcohol with nearly every social ill. Alcohol was blamed for domestic abuse, poverty, crime, and disease. The 1912 Anti-Saloon League *Yearbook*, for instance, presented charts indicating comparable increases in alcohol consumption alongside rising divorce rates. The WCTU called alcohol of being a "home wrecker." More insidiously, perhaps, reformers also associated alcohol with cities and immigrants, necessarily maligning America's immigrants, Catholics, and working classes in their crusade against liquor. Still, reformers believed that the abolition of "strong drink" would bring about social progress, would obviate



*Suffragettes campaigned tirelessly for the vote in the first two decades of the twentieth century, taking to the streets in public displays like this 1915 pre-election parade in New York City. During this one event, 20,000 women defied the gender norms that tried to relegate them to the private sphere and deny them the vote. Photograph, 1915. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election\\_suffrage\\_parade\\_NYC.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election_suffrage_parade_NYC.jpg).*

the need for prisons and insane asylums, would save women and children from domestic abuse, and usher in a more just, progressive society.

From the club movement and temperance campaigns emerged powerful, active, female activists. Perhaps no American reformer matched Jane Addams' in fame, energy, and innovation. Born in Cedarville, Illinois, in 1860, Addams lost her mother by the age of two and lived under the attentive care of her father. At seventeen, she left home to attend Rockford Female Seminary. An idealist, Addams sought the means to make the world a better place. She believed that well-educated women of means, such as herself, lacked practical strategies for engaging everyday reform. After four years at Rockford, Addams embarked upon on a multi-year "grand tour" of Europe. Jane found herself drawn to English settlement houses, a



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kind of prototype for social work in which philanthropists embedded themselves among communities and offered services to disadvantaged populations. After visiting London's Toynbee Hall in 1887, Addams returned to the US and in 1889 founded Hull House in Chicago with her longtime confidant and companion Ellen Gates Starr.

*The Settlement ... is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of the city. It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other ... It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race, a philosophy which will not waver when the race happens to be represented by a drunken woman or an idiot boy. Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House*

Hull House workers provided for their neighbors by running a nursery and a kindergarten, administering classes for parents and clubs for children, and organizing social and cultural events for the community. Florence Kelley stayed at Hull House from 1891 to 1899, taking the settlement house model to New York and founding the Henry Street Settlement there. But Kelley also influenced Addams, convincing her to move into the realm of social reform. Hull House began exposing conditions in local sweat shops and

advocating for the organization of workers. She called the conditions caused by urban poverty and industrialization a “social crime.” Hull House workers surveyed their community and produced statistics of poverty, disease, and living conditions that proved essential for reformers. Addams began pressuring politicians. Together Kelley and Addams petitioned legislators to pass anti-sweatshop legislation passed that limited the hours of work for women and children to eight per day. Yet Addams was an upper class white Protestant woman who had faced limits, like many reformers, in embracing what seemed to them radical policies. While Addams called labor organizing a “social obligation,” she also warned the labor movement against the “constant temptation towards class warfare.” Addams, like many reformers, favored cooperation between rich and poor and bosses and workers, whether cooperation was a realistic possibility or not.

Addams became a kind of celebrity. In 1912, she became the first woman to give a nominating speech at a major party convention when she seconded the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt as the Progressive Party's candidate for president. Her campaigns for social reform and women's rights won headlines and her voice became ubiquitous in progressive politics.

Addams' concerns grew beyond domestic concerns. Beginning with her work in the Anti-Imperialist League during the Spanish-American War Addams increasingly began to see militarism as a drain on resources better spent on social reform. In 1907 she

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wrote *Newer Ideals of Peace*, a book that would become for many a philosophical foundation of pacifism. Addams emerged as a prominent opponent of America's entry into World War I. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

It would be suffrage, ultimately, that would mark the full emergence of women in American public life. Generations of women—and, occasionally, men—had pushed for women's suffrage. Suffragists' hard work resulted in slow but encouraging steps forward during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Notable victories were won in the West, where suffragists mobilized large numbers of women and male politicians were open to experimental forms of governance. By 1911, six western states had passed suffrage amendments to their constitutions.

Women's suffrage was typically entwined with a wide range of reform efforts. Many suffragists argued that women's votes were necessary to clean up politics and combat social evils. By the 1890s, for example, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, then the largest women's organization in America, endorsed suffrage. Working-class women organized the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) in 1905 and campaigned for the vote alongside the National American Suffrage Association, a leading suffrage organization comprised largely of middle and upper-class women. WTUL members viewed the vote as a way to further their economic interests and to foster a new sense of respect for working-class women.

“What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist,” said Ruth Schneiderman, a WTUL leader, during a 1912 speech. “The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.”

Many suffragists adopted a much crueler message. Some, even outside of the South, argued that white women's votes were necessary to maintain white supremacy. Many American women found it advantageous to base their arguments for the vote on the necessity of maintaining white supremacy by enfranchising white, upper and middle class women. These arguments even stretched into international politics. But whatever the message, the suffrage campaign was winning.

The final push for women's suffrage came on the eve of World War I. Determined to win the vote; the National American Suffrage Association developed a dual strategy that focused on the passage of state voting rights laws and on the ratification of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Meanwhile, a new, more militant, suffrage organization emerged on the scene. Led by Alice Paul, the National Women's Party took to the streets to demand voting rights, organizing marches and protests that mobilized thousands of women. Beginning in January 1917, National Women's Party members also began to picket the White House, an action that led to the arrest and imprisonment of over 150 women.

In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson declared

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his support for the women's suffrage amendment and, two years later women's suffrage became a reality. After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, women from all walks of life mobilized to vote. They were driven by both the promise of change, but also in some cases by their anxieties about the future. Much had changed since their campaign began, the US was now more industrial than not, increasingly more urban than rural. The activism and activities of these new urban denizens also gave rise to a new American culture.

### IV. Targeting the Trusts

In one of the defining books of the Progressive Era, *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly argued that because “the corrupt politician has usurped too much of the power which should be exercised by the people,” the “millionaire and the trust have appropriated too many of the economic opportunities formerly enjoyed by the people.” Croly and other reformers believed that wealth inequality eroded democracy and reformers had to win back for the people the power usurped by the moneyed trusts. But what exactly were these “trusts,” and why did it suddenly seem so important to reform them?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a “trust” was a monopoly or cartel associated with the large corporations of the Gilded and Progressive Eras who entered into agreements—legal or otherwise—or consolidations to exercise exclusive control over a

specific product or industry under the control of a single entity. Certain types of monopolies, specifically for intellectual property like copyrights, patents, trademarks and trade-secrets, are protected under the Constitution for the “to promote the progress of science and useful arts,” but for power entities to control entire national markets was something wholly new, and, for many Americans, wholly unsettling.

The rapid industrialization, technological advancement, and urban growth of the 1870s and 1880s triggered major changes in the way businesses structured themselves. The “second industrial revolution,” made possible by the available natural resources, growth in the labor supply through immigration, increasing capital, new legal economic entities, novel production strategies, and a growing national market, was commonly asserted to be the natural product of the federal government's *laissez faire*, or “hands off,” economic policy. An unregulated business climate, the argument went, allowed for the growth of major trusts, most notably Andrew Carnegie's Carnegie Steel (later consolidated with other producers as U.S. Steel) and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. Each displayed the vertical and horizontal integration strategies common to the new trusts: Carnegie first utilized vertical integration by controlling every phase of business (raw materials, transportation, manufacturing, distribution), and Rockefeller adhered to horizontal integration by buying out competing refineries. Once dominant in a market, critics alleged,

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the trusts could artificially inflate prices, bully rivals, and bribe politicians.

Between 1897 and 1904 over 4,000 companies were consolidated down into 257 corporate firms. As one historian wrote, “By 1904 a total of 318 trusts held 40% of US manufacturing assets and boasted a capitalization of \$7 billion, seven times bigger than the US national debt.” With the 20<sup>th</sup> century came the age of monopoly. From such mergers and the aggressive business policies of wealthy men such as Carnegie and Rockefeller—controversial figures often referred to as “robber barons,” so named for the cutthroat stifling of economic competition and their mistreatment of their workers—and the widely accepted political corruption that facilitated it, opposition formed and pushed for regulations to reign in the power of monopolies. The great corporations became a major target of reformers.

Big business, whether in meatpacking, railroads, telegraph lines, oil, or steel, posed new problems for the American legal system. Before the Civil War, most businesses operated in single state. They might ship goods across state lines or to other countries, but they typically had offices and factories in just one state. Individual states naturally regulated industry and commerce. But extensive railroad routes crossed several state lines and new mass-producing corporations operated across the nation, raising questions about where the authority to regulate such practices rested. During the 1870s, many states

passed laws to check the growing power of vast new corporations. In the Midwest, so-called “Granger laws” (spurred by farmers who formed a network of organizations that were part political pressure group, part social club, and part mutual-aid society that became known as “the Grange”) regulated railroads and other new companies. Railroads and others opposed these regulations for restraining profits and, also, because of the difficulty of meeting the standards of 50 separate state regulatory laws. In 1877, the United States Supreme Court upheld these laws in a series of rulings, finding in cases such as *Munn v. Illinois* and *Stone v. Wisconsin* that railroads, and other companies of such size necessarily affected the public interest and could thus be regulated by individual states. In *Munn*, the court declared that “Property does become clothed with a public interest when used in a manner to make it of public consequence, and affect the community at large. When, therefore, one devoted his property to a use in which the public has an interest, he, in effect, grants to the public an interest in that use, and must submit to be controlled by the public for the common good, to the extent of the interest he has thus created.”

Later rulings, however, conceded that only the federal government could constitutionally regulate interstate commerce and the new national businesses operating it. And as more and more power and capital and market share flowed to the great corporations, the onus of regulation passed to the federal government. In 1887, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce

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Act, which established the Interstate Commerce Commission to stop discriminatory and predatory pricing practices. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 aimed to limit anticompetitive practices, such as those institutionalized in cartels and monopolistic corporations. It declared a “trust ...or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce... is declared to be illegal” and that those who “monopolize...any part of the trade or commerce...shall be deemed guilty.” The Sherman Anti-Trust Act declared that not all monopolies were illegal, only those that “unreasonably” stifled free trade. The courts seized on the law’s vague language, however, and the Act was turned against itself, manipulated and used, for instance, to limit the growing power of labor unions. Only in 1914, with the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, did Congress attempt to close loop holes in previous legislation.

Aggression against the trusts—and the progressive vogue for “trust busting”—took on new meaning under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. A reform Republican who ascended to the presidency after the death of William McKinley in 1901, Roosevelt’s youthful energy and confrontational politics captivated the nation. The writer Henry Adams said that he “showed the singular primitive quality that belongs to ultimate matter—the quality that medieval theology assigned to God—he was pure act.” Roosevelt was by no means anti-business. Instead, he envisioned his presidency as a mediator between opposing forces, like, for example, between labor unions and corporate executives. Despite his own wealthy background,

Roosevelt pushed for anti-trust legislation and regulations, arguing that the courts could not be relied upon to break up the trusts. Roosevelt also used his own moral judgment to determine which monopolies he would pursue. Roosevelt believed that there were good and bad trusts, necessary monopolies and corrupt ones. Although his reputation was wildly exaggerated, he was first major national politician to go after the trusts.

***“The great corporations which we have grown to speak of rather loosely as trusts are the creatures of the State, and the State not only has the right to control them, but it is in duty bound to control them wherever the need of such control is shown.” Teddy Roosevelt.***

His first target was the Northern Securities Company, a “holding” trust in which several wealthy bankers, most famously J.P. Morgan, used to hold controlling shares in all the major railroad companies in the American Northwest. Holding trusts had emerged as a way to circumvent the Sherman Anti-Trust Act: by controlling the majority of shares, rather than the principal, Morgan and his collaborators tried to claim that it was not a monopoly. Roosevelt’s administration sued and won in court and in 1904 the Northern Securities Company was ordered to disband into separate competitive companies. Two years later, in 1906, Roosevelt signed the Hepburn Act, allowing the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate best practices and set reasonable rates for the railroads.



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Roosevelt was more interested in regulating corporations than breaking them apart. Besides, the courts were slow and unpredictable. However, his successor after 1908, William Howard Taft, firmly believed in court-oriented trust-busting and during his four years in office more than doubled the quantity of monopoly break-ups that occurred during Roosevelt's seven years in office. Taft notably went after Carnegie's U.S. Steel, the world's first billion-dollar corporation formed from the consolidation of nearly every major American steel producer.

Trust-busting and the handling of monopolies dominated the election of 1912. When the Republican Party spurned Roosevelt's return to politics and renominated the incumbent Taft, Roosevelt left and formed his own coalition, the Progressive, or "Bull-Moose," Party. Whereas Taft took an all-encompassing view on the illegality of monopolies, Roosevelt adopted a "New Nationalism" program, which once again emphasized the regulation of already existing corporations, or, the expansion of federal power over the economy. In contrast, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic Party nominee, emphasized in his "New Freedom" agenda neither trust-busting or federal regulation but rather small business incentives so that individual companies could increase their competitive chances. Yet once he won the election, Wilson edged near to Roosevelt's position, signing the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act substantially enhanced the Sherman Act, specifically regulating mergers,

price discrimination, and protecting labor's access to collective bargaining and related strategies of picketing, boycotting, and protesting. Congress further created the Federal Trade Commission to enforce the Clayton Act, ensuring at least some measure of implementation.

While the three presidents—Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson—pushed the development and enforcement of anti-trust law, their commitments were uneven, and trust-busting itself manifested the political pressure put on politicians by the workers and farmers and progressive writers who so strongly drew attention to the ramifications of trusts and corporate capital on the lives of everyday Americans.

## V. Progressive Environmentalism

The potential scope of environmental destruction wrought by industrial capitalism was unparalleled in human history. Professional bison hunting expeditions nearly eradicated an entire species, industrialized logging companies could denude whole forests, chemical plants could pollute an entire region's water supply. As Americans built up the West and industrialization marched ever onward, reformers embraced environmental protections.

Historians often cite preservation and conservation as the two competing strategies that dueled for supremacy among environmental reformers during

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the Progressive Era. The tensions between these two approaches crystallized in the debate over a proposed dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley in California. The fight revolved around the provision of water for San Francisco. Engineers identified the location where the Tuolumne River ran through Hetch Hetchy as an ideal site for a reservoir. The project had been suggested in the 1880s but picked up momentum in the early twentieth century. But the valley was located inside Yosemite National Park. (Yosemite was designated a national park in 1890, though the land had been set aside earlier in a grant approved by President Lincoln in 1864.) The debate over Hetch Hetchy revealed two distinct positions on the value of the valley and on the purpose of public lands.

John Muir, a naturalist, writer, and founder of the Sierra Club, invoked the “God of the Mountains” in his defense of the valley in its supposedly pristine condition. Gifford Pinchot, arguably the father of American forestry and a key player in the federal management of national forests, meanwhile emphasized what he understood to be the purpose of conservation: “to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will serve the most people.” Muir took a wider view of what the people needed, writing that “everybody needs beauty as well as bread.” These dueling arguments revealed the key differences in environmental thought: Muir, on the side of the preservationists, advocated setting aside pristine lands for their aesthetic and spiritual value, for those who could take his advice to “[get] in

touch with the nerves of Mother Earth.” Pinchot, on the other hand, led the charge for conservation, a kind of environmental utilitarianism that emphasized the efficient use of available resources, through planning and control and “the prevention of waste.” In Hetch Hetchy, conservation won out. Congress approved the project in 1913. The dam was built and the valley flooded for the benefit of San Francisco residents.

While preservation was often articulated as an escape from an increasingly urbanized and industrialized way of life and as a welcome respite from the challenges of modernity (at least, for those who had the means to escape), the conservationists were more closely aligned with broader trends in American society. Although the “greatest good for the greatest number” was very nearly the catch phrase of conservation, conservationist policies most often benefited the nation’s financial interests. For example, many states instituted game laws to regulate hunting and protect wildlife, but laws could be entirely unbalanced. In Pennsylvania, local game laws included requiring firearm permits for non-citizens, barred hunting on Sundays, and banned the shooting of songbirds. These laws disproportionately affected Italian immigrants, critics said, as Italians often hunted songbirds for subsistence, worked in mines for low wages every day but Sunday, and were too poor to purchase permits or to pay the fines levied against them when game wardens caught them breaking these new laws. Other laws, for example, offered up resources to businesses at costs prohibitive to all but the wealthiest

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companies and individuals, or with regulatory requirements that could be met only by companies with extensive resources.

But it Progressive Era environmentalism was about more than the management of American public lands. After all, reformers addressing issues facing the urban poor were doing environmental work. Settlement house workers like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley focused on questions of health and sanitation, while activists concerned with working conditions, most notably Dr. Alice Hamilton, investigated both worksite hazards and occupational and bodily harm. The progressives' commitment to the provision of public services at the municipal level meant more coordination and oversight in matters of public health, waste management, even playgrounds and city parks. Their work focused on the intersection of communities and their material environments, highlighting the urgency of urban environmental concerns.

While reform movements focused their attention on the urban poor, other efforts targeted rural communities. The Country Life movement, spearheaded by Liberty Hyde Bailey, sought to support agrarian families and encourage young people to stay in their communities and run family farms. Early-twentieth-century educational reforms included a commitment to environmentalism at the elementary level. Led by Bailey and Anna Botsford Comstock, the nature study movement took students outside



*Suffragettes campaigned tirelessly for the vote in the first two decades of the twentieth century, taking to the streets in public displays like this 1915 pre-election parade in New York City. During this one event, 20,000 women defied the gender norms that tried to relegate them to the private sphere and deny them the vote. Photograph, 1915. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election\\_suffrage\\_parade\\_NYC.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election_suffrage_parade_NYC.jpg).*

to experience natural processes and to help them develop observational skills and an appreciation for the natural world.

Other examples highlight the interconnectedness of urban and rural communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The extinction of the North American passenger pigeon reveals the complexity of Progressive Era relationships between people and nature. Passenger pigeons were actively hunted, prepared at New York's finest restaurants and in the humblest of farm kitchens. Some hunted them for pay; others shot them in competitions at sport-

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ing clubs. And then they were gone, their ubiquity giving way only to nostalgia. Many Americans took notice at the great extinction of a species that had perhaps numbered in the billions and then was eradicated. Women in Audubon Society chapters organized against the fashion of wearing feathers—even whole birds—on ladies' hats. Upper and middle-class women made up the lion's share of the membership of these societies. They used their social standing to fight for birds. Pressure created national wildlife refuges and key laws and regulations that included the Lacey Act of 1900, banning the shipment of species killed illegally across state lines. Following the feathers backward, from the hats to the hunters to the birds themselves, and examining the ways women mobilized contemporary notions of womanhood in the service of protecting avian beauty, reveals a tangle of cultural and economic processes. Such examples also reveal the range of ideas, policies, and practices wrapped up in figuring out what—and who—American nature should be for.

## VI. Jim Crow and African American Life

Just as reformers advocated for business regulations, anti-trust laws, environmental protections, women's rights, and urban health campaigns, so too did many push for racial legislation in the American South. America's tragic racial history was not erased by the Progressive Era. In fact, in all to many ways, reform removed African Americans ever farther from Ameri-

can public life.

In the South, electoral politics remained a parade of electoral fraud, voter intimidation, and race-baiting. Democratic Party candidates stirred southern whites into frenzies with warnings of “negro domination” and of black men violating white women. The region's culture of racial violence and the rise of lynching as a mass public spectacle accelerated. And as the remaining African American voters threatened to the dominance of Democratic leadership in the South, southern Democrats turned to what many white southerners understood as a series of progressive electoral and social reforms—disenfranchisement and segregation. Just as reformers would clean up politics by taming city political machines, white southerners would “purify” the ballot box by restricting black voting and they would prevent racial strife by legislating the social separation of the races. The strongest supporters of such measures in the South movement were progressive Democrats and former Populists, both of whom saw in these reforms a way to eliminate the racial demagoguery that conservative Democratic party leaders had so effectively wielded. Leaders in both the North and South embraced and proclaimed the reunion of the sections on the basis of a shared Anglo-Saxon, white supremacy. As the nation took up the “white man's burden” to uplift the world's racially inferior peoples, the North looked to the South as an example of how to manage non-white populations. The South had become the nation's racial vanguard.

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The question was how to accomplish disenfranchisement. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment clearly prohibited states from denying any citizen the right to vote on the basis of race. In 1890 the state of Mississippi took on this legal challenge. A state newspaper called on politicians to devise “some legal defensible substitute for the abhorrent and evil methods on which white supremacy lies.” The state’s Democratic Party responded with a new state constitution designed to purge corruption at the ballot box through disenfranchisement. Those hoping to vote in Mississippi would have to jump through a series of hurdles designed with the explicit purpose of excluding the state’s African American population from political power. The state first established a poll tax, which required voters to pay for the privilege of voting. Second, it stripped the suffrage from those convicted of petty crimes most common among the state’s African Americans. Next, the state required voters to pass a literacy test. Local voting officials, who were themselves part of the local party machine, were responsible for judging whether voters were able to read and understand a section of the Constitution. In order to protect illiterate whites from exclusion, the so called “understanding clause” allowed a voter to qualify if they could adequately explain the meaning of a section that was read to them. In practice these rules were systematically abused to the point where local election officials effectively wielded the power to permit and deny suffrage at will. The disenfranchisement laws effectively moved electoral

conflict from the ballot box, where public attention was greatest, to the voting registrar, where supposedly color-blind laws allowed local party officials to deny the ballot without the appearance of fraud.

Between 1895 and 1908 the rest of the states in the South approved new constitutions including these disenfranchisement tools. Six southern states also added a grandfather clause, which bestowed the suffrage on anyone whose grandfather was eligible to vote in 1867. This ensured that whites who would have been otherwise excluded would still be eligible, at least until it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1915. Finally, each southern state adopted an all-white primary, excluded blacks from the Democratic primary, the only political contests that mattered across much of the South.

For all the legal double-talk, the purpose of these laws was plain. James Kimble Vardaman, later Governor of Mississippi, boasted “there is no use to equivocate or lie about the matter. Mississippi’s constitutional convention was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the nigger from politics; not the ignorant—but the nigger.” These technically colorblind tools did their work well. In 1900 Alabama had 121,159 literate black men of voting age. Only 3,742 were registered to vote. Louisiana had 130,000 black voters in the contentious election of 1896. Only 5,320 voted in 1900. Blacks were clearly the target of these laws, but that did not prevent some whites from being disenfranchised as well. Louisiana dropped 80,000



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white voters over the same period. Most politically engaged southern whites considered this a price worth paying in order to prevent the fraud that had plagued the region's elections.

At the same time that the South's Democratic leaders were adopting the tools to disenfranchise the region's black voters, these same legislatures were constructing a system of racial segregation even more pernicious. While it built on earlier practice, segregation was primarily a modern and urban system of enforcing racial subordination and deference. In rural areas, white and black southerners negotiated the meaning of racial difference within the context of personal relationships of kinship and patronage. An African American who broke the local community's racial norms could expect swift personal sanction that often included violence. The crop lien and convict lease systems were the most important legal tools of racial control in the rural South. Maintaining white supremacy there did not require segregation. Maintaining white supremacy within the city, however, was a different matter altogether. As the region's railroad networks and cities expanded, so too did the anonymity and therefore freedom of southern blacks. Southern cities were becoming a center of black middle class life that was an implicit threat to racial hierarchies. White southerners created the system of segregation as a way to maintain white supremacy in restaurants, theaters, public restrooms, schools, water fountains, train cars, and hospitals. Segregation inscribed the superiority of whites and

the deference of blacks into the very geography of public spaces.

As with disenfranchisement, segregation violated a plain reading of the constitution—in this case the Fourteenth Amendment. Here the Supreme Court intervened, ruling in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) that the Fourteenth Amendment only prevented discrimination directly by states. It did not prevent discrimination by individuals, businesses, or other entities. Southern states exploited this interpretation with the first legal segregation of railroad cars in 1888. In a case that reached the Supreme Court in 1896, New Orleans resident Homer Plessy challenged the constitutionality of Louisiana's segregation of streetcars. The court ruled against Plessy and, in the process, established the legal principle of separate but equal. Racially segregated facilities were legal provided they were equivalent. In practice this was rarely the case. The court's majority defended its position with logic that reflected the racial assumptions of the day. "If one race be inferior to the other socially," the court explained, "the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." Justice John Harlan, the lone dissenter, countered, "our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law" Harlan went on to warn that the court's decision would "permit the seeds of race hatred to be planted under the sanction of law." In their rush to fulfill Harlan's prophecy, southern whites codified and

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enforced the segregation of public spaces.

Segregation was built on a fiction—that there could be a white South socially and culturally distinct from African Americans. Its legal basis rested on the constitutional fallacy of “separate but equal.” Southern whites erected a bulwark of white supremacy that would last for nearly sixty years. Segregation and disenfranchisement in the South rejected black citizenship and relegated black social and cultural life to segregated spaces. African Americans lived divided lives, acting the part whites demanded of them in public, while maintaining their own world apart from whites. This segregated world provided a measure of independence for the region’s growing black middle class, yet at the cost of poisoning the relationship between black and white. Segregation and disenfranchisement created entrenched structures of racism that completed the total rejection of the promises of Reconstruction.

And yet, many black Americans of the Progressive Era fought back. Just as activists such as Ida Wells worked against southern lynching, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois vied for leadership among African American activists, resulting in years of intense rivalry and debated strategies for the uplifting of black Americans.

Born into the world of bondage in Virginia in 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington was subjected to the degradation and exploitation of slavery early in life.

But Washington also developed an insatiable thirst to learn. Working against tremendous odds, Washington matriculated into Hampton University in Virginia and thereafter established a southern institution that would educate many black Americans, the Tuskegee Institute. Located in Alabama, Washington envisioned Tuskegee’s contribution to black life to come through industrial education and vocational training. He believed that such skills would help African Americans too accomplish economic independence while developing a sense of self-worth and pride of accomplishment, even while living within the putrid confines of Jim Crow. Washington poured his life into Tuskegee, and thereby connected with leading white philanthropic interests. Individuals such as Andrew Carnegie, for instance, financially assisted Washington and his educational ventures.

As a leading spokesperson for black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly after Frederick Douglass’s exit from the historical stage in early 1895, Washington’s famous “Atlanta Compromise” speech from that same year encouraged black Americans to “cast your bucket down” to improve life’s lot under segregation. In the same speech, delivered one year before the Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that legalized segregation under the “separate but equal” doctrine, Washington said to white Americans, “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.” Both praised as a race leader

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and pilloried as an accommodationist to America's unjust racial hierarchy, Washington's public advocacy of a conciliatory posture towards white supremacy concealed the efforts to which Washington went to assist African Americans in the legal and economic quest for racial justice. In addition to founding Tuskegee, Washington also published a handful of influential books, including the autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901). Like Du Bois, Washington was also active in black journalism, working to fund and support black newspaper publications, most of which sought to counter Du Bois's growing influence. Washington died in 1915, during World War I, of ill health in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Speaking decades later, W.E.B. DuBois said Washington had, in his 1895 "Compromise" speech, "implicitly abandoned all political and social rights. . . I never thought Washington was a bad man . . . I believed him to be sincere, though wrong." Du Bois would directly attack Washington in his classic 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, but at the turn of the century he could never escape the shadow of his longtime rival. "I admired much about him," Du Bois admitted, "Washington . . . died in 1915. A lot of people think I died at the same time."

Du Bois's criticism reveals the politicized context of the black freedom struggle and exposes the many positions available to black activists. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868, W. E. B. Du Bois entered the world as a free person of color three years



Suffragettes campaigned tirelessly for the vote in the first two decades of the twentieth century, taking to the streets in public displays like this 1915 pre-election parade in New York City. During this one event, 20,000 women defied the gender norms that tried to relegate them to the private sphere and deny them the vote. Photograph, 1915. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election_suffrage_parade_NYC.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election\\_suffrage\\_parade\\_NYC.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-election_suffrage_parade_NYC.jpg).

after the Civil War ended. Raised by a hardworking and independent mother, Du Bois's New England childhood alerted him to the reality of race even as it invested the emerging thinker with an abiding faith in the power of education. Du Bois graduated at the top of his high school class and attended Fisk University. Du Bois's sojourn to the South in 1880s left a distinct impression that would guide his life's work to study what he called the "Negro problem," the systemic racial and economic discrimination that Du Bois prophetically pronounced would be *the* problem

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of the twentieth century. After Fisk, Du Bois's educational path trended back North, and he attended Harvard, earned his second degree, crossed the Atlantic for graduate work in Germany, and circulated back to Harvard and in 1895—the same year as Washington's famous Atlanta address—became the first black American to receive a Ph.D. there.

Du Bois became one of America's foremost intellectual leaders on questions of social justice by producing scholarship that underscored the humanity of African Americans. Du Bois's work as an intellectual, scholar, and college professor began during the Progressive Era, a time in American history marked by rapid social and cultural change as well as complex global political conflicts and developments. Du Bois addressed these domestic and international concerns not only in his classrooms at Wilberforce University in Ohio and Atlanta University in Georgia, but also in a number of his early publications on the history of the transatlantic slave trade and black life in urban Philadelphia. The most well-known of these early works included *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *Darkwater* (1920). In these books, Du Bois combined incisive historical analysis with engaging literary drama to validate black personhood and attack the inhumanity of white supremacy, particularly in the lead up to and during World War I. In addition to publications and teaching, Du Bois set his sights on political organizing for civil rights, first with the Niagara Movement and later with its offspring the National Association



"W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois," 1919. *Library of Congress*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003681451/>.

for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Du Bois's main work with the NAACP lasted from 1909 to 1934 as editor of *The Crisis*, one of America's leading black publications. Du Bois attacked Washington and urged black Americans to concede to nothing, to make no compromises and advocate for equal rights under the law. Throughout his early career, he pushed for civil rights legislation, launched legal challenges against discrimination, organized protests against injustice, and applied his capacity for clear research and sharp prose to expose the racial sins of Progressive Era America.

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***“We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults... Any discrimination based simply on race or color is barbarous, we care not how hallowed it be by custom, expediency or prejudice ... discriminations based simply and solely on physical peculiarities, place of birth, color of skin, are relics of that unreasoning human savagery of which the world is and ought to be thoroughly ashamed ... Persistent manly agitation is the way to liberty.” W.E.B. DuBois***

W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington made a tremendous historical impact and left a notable historical legacy. Reared in different settings, early life experiences and even personal temperaments oriented both leader’s lives and outlooks in decidedly different ways. Du Bois’s confrontational voice boldly targeted white supremacy. He believed in the power of social science to arrest the reach of white supremacy. Washington advocated incremental change for longer-term gain. He contended that economic self-sufficiency would pay off at a future date. Although Du Bois directly spoke out against Washington in the chapter “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington” in *Souls of Black Folk*, four years later in 1907 they shared the same lectern at Philadelphia Divinity School to address matters of race, history, and culture in the American South. As much as the philosophies of Du Bois and Washington diverged when their lives overlapped,

highlighting their respective quests for racial and economic justice demonstrates the importance of understanding the multiple strategies used to demand that America live up to its democratic creed.

## VII. Conclusion

Industrial capitalism unleashed powerful forces in American life. Along with wealth, technological innovation, and rising standards of living, a host of social problems unsettled many who turned to reform politics to set the world right again. The Progressive Era signaled that a turning point had been reached for many Americans who were suddenly willing to confront the age’s problems with national political solutions. Reformers sought to bring order to chaos, to bring efficiency to inefficiency, and to bring justice to injustice. Causes varied, constituencies shifted, and the tangible effects of so much energy was difficult to measure, but the Progressive Era signaled a bursting of long-simmering tensions and introduced new patterns in the relationship between American society, American culture, and American politics.

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# UNIT 5

## TIMELINE

| Progressive Era Timeline: 1889-1916 |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1889                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hull House</b> opened by <b>Jane Addams</b> and <b>Ellen Gates Starr</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1890                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Jacob Riis</b> publishes <i>How the Other Half Lives</i>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1895                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lillian Wald</b> established the <b>Henry Street Settlement</b> in New York City.</li> </ul>   |
| 1898                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Florence Kelley</b> became a leader in the <b>National Consumers' League</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1900                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialist Party founded in the United States.</li> <li>• Robert M. La Follette elected governor of Wisconsin.</li> </ul>  |
| 1901                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republican, <b>Theodore Roosevelt</b>, became president after William McKinley assassinated.</li> </ul>   |
| 1902                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Securities Company named in antitrust lawsuit.</li> <li>• Roosevelt becomes strike arbitrator in anthracite coal strike in Pennsylvania.</li> </ul>                              |
| 1903                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women's Trade Union League</b> founded.</li> <li>• Construction on <b>Panama Canal</b> started.</li> </ul>   |
| 1904                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roosevelt issued his <b>Roosevelt Corollary</b> to the Monroe Doctrine.</li> <li>• <b>Lincoln Steffens</b> published <i>The Shame of the Cities</i>.</li> </ul>                           |
| 1905                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Industrial Workers of the World</b> founded.</li> <li>• Roosevelt created <b>US Forest Service</b>, naming <b>Gifford Pinchot</b> director.</li> </ul>                                 |
| 1906                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Upton Sinclair's <u>The Jungle</u></b> published, resulting in the passage of the <b>Pure Food and Drug Act, Meat Inspection Act</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Hepburn Act</b> passed.</li> </ul> |
| 1907                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Panic on Wall Street.</li> <li>• "The Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan signed, limiting immigration to the US.</li> </ul>  |
| 1908                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Muller v Oregon</i> ruling by Supreme Court, upholding limits on working hours for women.</li> <li>• <b>William Howard Taft</b> elected president.</li> </ul>                          |

# UNIT 5

## TIMELINE

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|-------------|---|
| <b>1909</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20,000 New York City garment worker uprising that led to the unionization of unskilled workers.</li> <li><b>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)</b> formed.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1911</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Triangle Shirtwaist Fire</b> in New York City; 146 killed.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1912</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democrat, <b>Woodrow Wilson</b>, elected president, over Roosevelt for the Progressives and Taft for the Republicans.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1913</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Suffragists</b> march on Washington D.C.</li> <li><b>Federal Reserve Act</b> passed, creating a centralized banking system and monetary-policy authority for the United States.</li> <li><b>Sixteenth Amendment</b> is ratified, legalizing <b>graduated income tax</b>.</li> </ul> |
| <b>1914</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Federal Trade Commission</b> created for the purpose of investigating, reporting, and addressing unfair market practices.</li> <li><b>Clayton Antitrust Act</b> passed, exempting unions from prosecution and fixing weaknesses of the Sherman Antitrust Act.</li> </ul>            |
| <b>1916</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First birth-control clinic opened in the US by <b>Margaret Sanger</b>.</li> <li><b>National Park Service</b> established.</li> </ul>   |

# WORLD WAR I

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## World War I in Theme Analysis

**The U.S. Becomes A World Power** The Great War (WWI) was an example of progressivism at home and abroad for the United States. The U.S. had developed an infrastructure capable of not only supporting other countries at war but also allowing for the nation's direct involvement in a large, overseas war. During this time, U.S. political/military isolationism ended, as U.S. interests mingled with that of Europe's. The Progressive era continued into WWI, led by Woodrow Wilson (the most progressive president of the time). Wilson hoped --as a result of the U.S. intervening not as an ally in the war but as an "Associated Power" essentially "rescuing" the Allies-- that the nation would be in a better position to influence world relations for the betterment of humankind. Wilson's war aim was for the U.S. to control/lead the peace process at the Versailles Peace conference.

What Wilson brought to Versailles was his progressive spirit and a vision for how countries should conduct and settle international disputes. With an accompanying 200 "experts" in European history, culture, geography, and ethnology, Wilson arrived at the peace conference in anticipation of creating a stable Europe. He wanted the Big Four (US, GB, FR, IT) to agree to create a German republic via a peace settlement that was not punitive toward the Germans (who were not represented at the conference), as the Europeans desired. He wanted the creation of the League of Nations, and he pushed hard for national self-determina-

tion for any countries mandated to the Big Four under the League. Wilson's policies, practices, and ideals were ahead of their time. The international community was not ready to follow Wilson's lead. And, apart from the League of Nations, Wilson's progressive plans for Germany and Europe were not adopted by the Europeans.

At home, the public was tired of extensive government growth and the forced progressivism of war time. The public also was disillusioned with the nation's involvement in the war, feeling tricked into it by Europeans, and rejected Wilson's ideas for the nation to feature prominently in the promotion of international peace. The peace treaty was rejected by the Senate, and the United States never joined the League of Nations. Americans retreated back into their perceived isolationism and rejected social progressivism. WWI brought on too many changes too soon for most Americans. Yet, much of what Wilson wanted ultimately was embraced by many nations around the world. (For example, Wilsonian self-determination philosophy even influenced one Ho Chi Minh to lead the fight for Vietnamese independence from French colonial power.) Americans eventually came to view their nation's role in the world essentially in "Wilsonian" terms.

## Background to World War I

On June 28, 1914 years of tension between ethnic minorities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire erupt-

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ed into war after a Serbian terrorist killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his pregnant wife, while they were in a Serbian region. Austria-Hungary wanted to punish the Serbs, so it asked for help from militarily-strong Germany. The Serbs asked for help from Russia and France, in response. After that, a complex series of European alliances that had been designed to maintain the balance of power in Europe resulted in World War I, with the two leading opponents becoming Germany versus the United Kingdom.

As the war began, the United States, under Woodrow Wilson's presidency, remained neutral, but hopes for peace were unrealistic. Ideologically and culturally, Americans tended to side with countries like Britain and France, but over eight-million people out of 97 million in the United States at the time were of German background.

Wilson, like many Americans, had been a strong proponent of neutral rights on the high seas. Since Washington's administration in the 1790s, the US argued that rights of non-warring powers on the oceans should be respected by warring powers (It is important to note that this philosophical argument served only to justify the US economic desire to trade uninhibited, when and where it wanted, with the particular aim of picking up trade where warring powers were not able to continue it). The philosophy of neutral rights, though, was not embraced or respected actively nor consistently by the leading powers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Wilson wanted to promote it in the 20<sup>th</sup>.

## The factors which pulled the United States into the war were:

- German U-boat attacks, such as that on the British ship, Lusitania, on May 7, 1915, which killed 128 Americans. The French vessel, Sussex, also was attacked, and several Americans were injured.
- The fact that Great Britain and other allied powers often flew the flags of neutral powers like the United States in order to avoid detection by U-boats. When the Germans figured this out, all neutral vessels were at risk of attack. When the US complained, the Germans issued the Sussex Pledge in 1915 in which they said they would stop attacking merchant ships without warning, if the US were to get the allies to obey international law. The US, though, was not in a position to do so. Eventually, between February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, the Germans sank six American ships.
- Economic ties also pulled the US into the war. At the time, the US was a creditor nation. By 1917 US banks had loaned around two billion dollars to allied governments.
- The Zimmerman Telegram (a decoded message from the German foreign minister to the Mexican government) said if Germany were to war with the US that Mexico and Germany could ally in order to reclaim for Mexico Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.

# WORLD WAR I

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Wilson asked for war with Germany on April 2, 1917, and though many were against the war (including Jeannette Rankin of Montana the first woman representative in Congress) the vote was 373 to 50 in favor of war.

## Homefront

### Government forced progressivism:

The declaration of war moved the power of the federal government into the fore of American life. There were a variety of ways in which federal power advanced during the war.

- Economic mobilization – business and government worked together in the War Industries Board (1917) for the purpose of coordinating production, setting product quotas, fixing prices, and allocating raw materials.
- Daylight Savings Time was set in 1918 in order to provide more daylight at the end of working days during late spring, summer, and early fall.
- The railroads were consolidated and run as a single system under government control, but without removing private ownership.
- The government also took over the telegraph and telephone systems.
- Congress ordered the building of more ships to expand the merchant marine.
- National War Labor Board (1918) was created to mediate labor disputes. It endorsed collective bargaining negotiations between representatives of workers and employers for better pay, working conditions, and hours. The NWLB endorsed the eight-hour work day, in return for workers promising not to strike during the war.
- The US Food Administration (1917), led by Herbert Hoover, directed a relief program in Belgium, promoted the increase of food production and conservation, along with the planting of Liberty Gardens and programs like “meatless Mondays” and “wheatless Wednesdays.” As a result, food shipments to the allies tripled.
- The government issued Liberty Loans from 1917-1918 in order to help finance the war.
- The government established a vast propaganda machine via the Creel Committee or the Committee on Public Information, led by George Creel, who called its efforts the “World’s greatest adventure in advertising. Because not all Americans supported the war, e.g. some German-Americans, Irish-Americans, and socialists, there was a push to label non-supporters as “slackers” or “Kaiserites” in order to tap down resistance via ostracism. 150,000 lecturers, writers, artists, actors, and scholars were hired to champion the cause of war and stir hatred of the “Hun.”



# WORLD WAR I

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- Additionally, Americanization movements were encouraged in which immigrants were pushed to give up native culture, while some states went so far as to prohibit the use of foreign languages in public and German books were removed from libraries and sometimes burned. Some towns banned German music, like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, considering it “one of the most dangerous forms of German propaganda, because it appeals to the emotions and has power to sway an audience as nothing else can.” Schools also dropped the teaching of German in high school, and towns with German-sounding names (and families with them) sometimes changed them. German words during the war were altered, as well. For example, sauerkraut became known as liberty cabbage, dachshunds were called liberty pups, and German measles (yes, even disease!) was renamed Liberty measles. Worst of all, mobs sometimes attacked people with German names or believed to be holding antiwar sentiments.
- Civil liberties were restricted via the Espionage Act (1917), which issued severe penalties for anyone interfering with the draft or encouraging disloyalty, and the Sedition Act (1918), which added penalties for anyone abusing the US government in writing. 1,500 persons were arrested under these acts, including Socialist Party leader, Eugene V. Debs, who served 32 months in prison. When groups challenged the constitutionality of these acts in court the Supreme Court upheld the laws arguing that freedom of speech was never absolute, particularly in wartime. The Civil Liberties Bureau (which later became the American Civil Liberties Union) formed during the war to challenge abuses to Americans’ constitutional rights, but most Americans didn’t object to the infringements, including some extreme actions such as the American Plan, which arrested ANY woman found within a five-mile, pure zone around a military establishment.
- The 18th Amendment established the prohibition of the manufacturing, shipment, or sale of alcoholic beverages. Passed in 1917 and ratified in 1919, it went into effect in 1920.
- In the immediate post-war era, also, the government, fearful of the spread of communism within the US, instituted under the Federal Bureau of Investigation and J. Edgar Hoover the Palmer Raids (in coordination with Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer) against labor union activists and those who were believed anarchists. State legislatures also outlawed syndicalism, which was seen as a radical, pro-labor political movement that advocated the use of strikes to bring industry under the control of workers. An “Americanism” movement took hold of the nation, pushing for a WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) ideal

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in society. Two men associated with anarchism, Nicola Sacco & Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed, and some aliens suspected of radicalism were deported, but by 1920 what had become known as the Red Scare had faded due to the fact that no major radical thread existed.

- In the Election of 1920, Democrat, who'd lost control of Congress in 1918, were no longer favored. Americans turned against Progressivism, and the Republicans took an anti-progressive and anti-Wilson stand. They chose Warren G. Harding of Ohio, who won more so because he wasn't Wilson, and his administration became one associated with scandal and corruption, including rumors of infidelity and that he was of mixed race, ancestrally.

## Women

Women entered the work force to replace men in factories in order to meet the wartime labor demand. This was at the same time as many women were fighting for the right to vote in a campaign to extend democracy to women. A major picket by the National Woman's Party in 1917 of the White House in Washington DC embarrassed the government with slogans like, "Mr. President. How long must women wait for liberty?" The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1920) gave women the right to vote, nationally, in the US.

## African-Americans

With economic crop disaster due to the boll weevil (beetle) and racial violence like lynching in the South, African-Americans moved northward for war-related job opportunities in what has become known as the Great Migration. When in the North, salaries often doubled, while racial tensions in industrial cities increased. In July of 1917, one of the worst race riots in US history occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois. The South felt the impact of the Great Migration in that some southern towns were devastated by population loss.

## Warfront

### US Mobilization Steps:

- Navy had grown large and powerful and was able to take action, so that by 1918 U-boats were not a significant danger.
- Army was not ready and millions of men and thousands of women were mobilized. In 1917, the US Army and National Guard had only 372,000 men. The 1917 Selective Service Act established compulsory military service for men 21 to 30, and twenty-four million men registered, while 2.8 million were drafted. Conscientious objectors were exempted.
- 13,000 women joined in clerical roles; 18,000 were in the Army Corps of Nurses, but none got any rank, pay, or benefits

# WORLD WAR I

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- 400,000 African-Americans served in WWI, with 200,000 overseas, and 30,000 on the front lines. Emmett J. Scott became a special assistant to the Secretary of War and advised on African-Americans in the war. But, despite this service, Jim Crow laws still flourished throughout the South, and when African-Americans were awarded the French honor for combat bravery, the “Cross of War,” they were not allowed to march in related parades.
- “Over There” for US troops mean pushing back via France in June 1917 of the Germans. By May 1918 the Germans were shifted. The US had its own sector of the front and a July counter offensive in 1918 under General Pershing was very successful. US battles put the war into allied control, and the Germans requested an armistice, which was granted on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918. In total, nine million soldiers died, and thirty-two nations were involved.
- The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), signed after the Bolshevik Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin turned Russia communist in 1917, meant that Russia withdrew from the war by making peace with Germany, being given vast territory in Central Europe, and revealing to the world that secret treaties had been made between the allies on how they would divide up the lands and colonies of enemy power postwar.
- Wilson argued that impingements on neutral rights, secret treaties, etc... were damaging to global peace. His famous Fourteen Points called for: arms reduction, no secret treaties, freedom of the seas, low trade barriers, colonies based on national self-determination (or interests of colonial peoples), and a League of Nations. The allies were not interested in the Fourteen Points beyond being topics for discussion, but the Germans wanted to base the peace settlement on them. The Europeans, though, wanted a punishing peace and got one in which the Germans: assumed war guilt, gave up colonies and other European territories, paid five billion in reparations, could hold no military beyond an army of 100,000 men. The treaty was signed in June of 1919. Wilson was very disappointed but still wanted the treaty approved by the US Senate, but opponents of the treaty feared that the League of Nations’ Article 10, which called for mutual military alliance with member nations, would draw the US back into another of Europe’s

## Diplomacy of War

- From the start Wilson wanted to enter the war to control the peace. Wilson labeled the US as an Associated Power, which was to make the US contribution toward victory as prominent as possible so that he could maximize US influence in the peace process. Wilson was an idealist who wanted to change the world forever by creating a post-war peace led by the United States.

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wars. Wilson, though very sick, campaigned for public support, but the US did not approve of the treaty with the League of Nations. In 1921, Congress instead approved the formal end of the war for the US.

- At the conference in France that resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson arrived with a progressive entourage of two-hundred intellectuals (experts in European culture, geography, history, and ethnology) who would help redraw the map of Europe and participate in the peace process. The entire geopolitical status of Europe changed while the peace process was ongoing.
  - The Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled into Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, and Hungary.
  - Germany became a republic
  - Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became independent from Russia
  - US troops joined an international force that invaded Poland to stop it from being taken over by the Bolsheviks.
- All and all, the end of World War I helped set a stage from which the conditions for the causes of WWII could potentially arise.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

# WORLD WAR I & ITS AFTERMATH



*Striking steel mill workers holding bulletins, Chicago, Illinois, September 22, 1919. ExplorePAhistory.com*

## I. Introduction

World War I (“The Great War”) toppled empires, created new nations, and sparked tensions that would explode across future years. On the battlefield, its gruesome modern weaponry wrecked an entire generation of young men. The United States entered the conflict in 1917 and was never the same. The war heralded to the world the United States’ potential as a global military power, and, domestically, it advanced but then beat back American progressivism by unleashing vicious waves of repression. The war simultaneously stoked national pride and fueled disenchantments that burst Progressive Era hopes for the modern world. And it laid the groundwork for a global depression, a

second world war, and an entire history of national, religious, and cultural conflict around the globe.

## II. Prelude to War

As the German empire rose in power and influence at the end of the nineteenth century, skilled diplomats maneuvered this disruption of traditional powers and influences into several decades of European peace. In Germany, however, a new ambitious monarch would overshadow years of tactful diplomacy. Wilhelm II rose to the German throne in 1888. He admired the British Empire of his grandmother, Queen Victoria, and envied the Royal Navy of Great Britain so much so that he attempted to build a rival German navy and



# WORLD WAR I AND ITS AFTERMATH

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plant colonies around the globe. The British viewed the prospect of a German navy as a strategic threat, but, jealous of what he perceived to as a lack of prestige in the world, Wilhelm II pressed Germany's case for access to colonies and symbols of status suitable for a world power. Wilhelm's maneuvers and Germany's rise spawned a new system of alliances as rival nations warily watched Germany's expansion.

In 1892, German posturing worried the leaders of Russia and France and prompted a defensive alliance to counter the existing triple threat between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. Britain's Queen Victoria remained unassociated with the alliances until a series of diplomatic crises and an emerging German naval threat led to British agreements with Czar Nicholas II and French President Emile Loubet in the early twentieth century. (The alliance between Great Britain, France, and Russia became known as the Triple Entente.)

The other great threat to European peace was the Ottoman Empire, in Turkey. While the leaders of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire showed little interest in colonies elsewhere, Turkish lands on its southern border appealed to their strategic goals. However, Austrian-Hungarian expansion in Europe worried Czar Nicholas II who saw Russia as both the historic guarantor of the Slavic nations in the Balkans and as the competitor for territories governed by the Ottoman Empire.

By 1914, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire had control of Bosnia and Herzegovina and viewed Slavic Serbia, a nation protected by Russia, as its next challenge. On June 28, 1914, after Serbian Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austrian-Hungarian heirs to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Grand Duchess Sophie, vengeful nationalist leaders believed the time had arrived to eliminate the rebellious ethnic Serbian threat.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States played an insignificant role in global diplomacy—it rarely forayed into internal European politics. The federal government did not participate in international diplomatic alliances but nevertheless championed and assisted with the expansion of the transatlantic economy. American businesses and consumers benefited from the trade generated as the result of the extended period of European peace.

Stated American attitudes toward international affairs followed the advice given by President George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address, one-hundred and twenty years before America's entry in World War I. He had recommended that his fellow countrymen avoid “foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues” and “those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.”

# WORLD WAR I AND IT'S AFTERMATH

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A national foreign policy of neutrality reflected America's inward-looking focus on the construction and management of its new powerful industrial economy (built in large part with foreign capital). The federal government possessed limited diplomatic tools with which to engage an international struggles for world power. America's small and increasingly antiquated military precluded forceful coercion and left American diplomats to persuade by reason, appeals to justice, or economic coercion. But in the 1880s, as Americans embarked upon empire, Congress authorized the construction of a modern Navy. The Army nevertheless remained small and underfunded compared to the armies of many industrializing nations.

After the turn of the century, the Army and Navy faced a great deal of organizational uncertainty. New technologies—airplanes, motor vehicles, submarines, modern artillery—stressed the capability of Army and Navy personnel to effectively procure and use them. The nation's Army could police Native Americans in the West and garrison recent overseas acquisitions, but it could not sustain a full-blown conflict of any size. The Davis Act of 1908 and the National Defense Act of 1916 represented the rise of the modern versions of the National Guard and military reserves. A system of state-administered units available for local emergencies that received conditional federal funding for training could be activated for use in international wars. The National Guard program

encompassed individual units separated by state borders. The program supplied summer training for college students as a reserve officer corps. This largely resolved the myriad of conflicts between the demands of short term state problems such as natural disasters, the fear in the federal government of too few or substandard soldiers, and state leaders who thought their men would fill gaps in the national armed forces during international wars. Military leaders resisted similar efforts from allied nations to use American forces as fillers for depleted armies. The federal and state governments needed a long term strategic reserve full of trained soldiers and sailors. Meanwhile, for weapons and logistics, safe and reliable prototypes of new technologies capable of rapid deployment often ran into developmental and production delays.

Border troubles in Mexico served as an important field test for modern American military forces. Revolution and chaos threatened American business interests in Mexico. Mexican reformer Francisco Madero challenged Porfirio Diaz's corrupt and unpopular conservative regime, was jailed, and fled to San Antonio, where he penned the Plan of San Luis Potosí, paving the way for the Mexican Revolution and the rise of armed revolutionaries across the country.

In April 1914, President Woodrow Wilson ordered Marines to accompany a naval escort to Veracruz on the lower eastern coast of Mexico. After a brief

# WORLD WAR I AND ITS AFTERMATH

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battle, the Marines supervised the city government and prevented shipments of German arms to Mexican leader Victor Huerta until they departed in November 1914. The raid emphasized the continued reliance on naval forces and the difficulty in modernizing the military during a period of European imperial influence in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The threat of war in Europe enabled passage of the Naval Act of 1916. President Wilson declared that the national goal was to build the Navy as “incomparably, the greatest...in the world.” And yet Mexico still beckoned. The Wilson administration had withdrawn its support of Diaz, but watched warily as the Revolution devolved into assassinations and deceit. In 1916, Pancho Villa, a popular revolutionary in Northern Mexico, spurned by American support for rival contenders, raided Columbus, New Mexico killed seventeen Americans and burned down the town center before sustaining severe casualties from American soldiers and retreating. In response, President Wilson commissioned Army General John “Black Jack” Pershing to capture Villa and disperse his rebels. Motorized vehicles, reconnaissance aircraft, and the wireless telegraph aided in the pursuit of Villa. Motorized vehicles in particular allowed General Pershing supplies without relying on railroads controlled by the Mexican government. The aircraft assigned to the campaign crashed or were grounded due to mechanical malfunctions, but they provided invaluable lessons in their worth and use in war. Wilson used the powers of the new National Defense Act to mobilize over 100,000 National Guard

units across the country as a show of force in northern Mexico.

The conflict between the United States and Mexico might have escalated into full-scale war if the international crisis in Europe had not overwhelmed the public’s attention. After the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, President Wilson declared American neutrality. He insisted from the start that the United States be neutral “in fact as well as in name;” a policy the majority of American people enthusiastically endorsed. What exactly “neutrality” meant in a world of close economic connections, however, prompted immediate questions the United States was not yet adequately prepared to answer. Ties to the British and French proved strong, and those nations obtained far more loans and supplies than the Germans. In October 1914, President Wilson approved commercial credit loans to the combatants which made it increasingly difficult for the nation to claim impartiality as war spread through Europe. Trade and trade-related financial relations with combatant nations conflicted with previous agreements with the Allies that ultimately drew the nation further into the conflict. In spite of mutually declared blockades between Germany, Great Britain, and France, munitions and other war suppliers in the United States witnessed a brisk and booming increase in business. The British naval blockades that often stopped or seized ships proved annoying and costly, but the unrestricted and surprise torpedo attacks from German submarines were far more deadly. In May 1915, the sinking of

# WORLD WAR I AND IT'S AFTERMATH

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the RMS Lusitania at the cost of over a hundred American lives and other German attacks on American and British shipping raised the ire of the public and stoked the desire for war.

If American diplomatic tradition avoided alliances and the Army seemed inadequate for sustained overseas fighting, the United States outdistanced the nations of Europe in one important measure of world power: by 1914, the nation held the top position in the global industrial economy. The United States producing slightly more than one-third of the world's manufactured goods, roughly equal to the outputs of France, Great Britain, and Germany combined.

## III. War Spreads Through Europe

After the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and Grand Duchess Sophie, Austria secured the promise of aid from its German ally and issued a list of ten ultimatums to Serbia. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia for failure to meet all of the demands. Russia, determined to protect Serbia, began to mobilize its armed forces. On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia to protect Austria after warnings directed at Czar Nicholas II failed to stop Russian preparations for war.

In spite of the central European focus of the initial crises, the first blow was struck against neutral Belgium in northwestern Europe. Germany made

plans to deal with the French and Russian threats by taking advantage of the sluggish Russian mobilization to focus the mission of the Germany army on France. Similar to the military operations of 1871, to enter France quickly German military leaders activated the Schlieffen Plan that directed the placement shift of German armies by rapid rail transport. The clever strategy deterred and confused Russian forces and ultimately led to a victory march over Belgium and into France.

Belgium fell victim early to invading German forces. Germany wanted to avoid the obvious avenue of advance across the French-German border and encounter the French army units stationed there. German army commanders ordered a wide sweep around the French border forces that led straight to Belgium. However, this violation of Belgian neutrality also ensured that Great Britain entered the war against Germany. On August 4, 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany for failure to respect Belgium as a neutral nation.

In 1915, the European war had developed into a series of bloody trench stalemates that continued through the following year. Offensives, largely carried out by British and French armies, achieved nothing but huge numbers of casualties. Peripheral campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in Turkey at Gallipoli, throughout the Middle East, and in various parts of Africa were either unsuccessful or had no real bearing on the European contest for victory. The third year of

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the war proposed promises of great German successes in eastern Europe after the regime of Czar Nicholas II collapsed in Russia in March 1917. At about the same time, the German general staff demanded the reimposition of unrestricted submarine warfare to deprive the Allies of replenishment supplies from the United States.

The Germans realized that submarine warfare would likely bring intervention on behalf of the United States. However, the Germans also believed the European war would be over before American soldiers could arrive in sufficient numbers to alter the balance of power. A German diplomat, Arthur Zimmermann, planned to complicate the potential American intervention. He offered support to the Mexican government via a desperate bid to regain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Mexican national leaders declined the offer, but the revelation of the Zimmermann Telegram helped to usher the United States into the war.

## IV. America Enters the War

By the fall of 1916 and spring of 1917, President Wilson believed an imminent German victory would drastically and dangerously alter the balance of power in Europe. With a good deal of public support inflamed by submarine warfare and items like the Zimmermann telegram (which revealed a German menace in Mexico), Congress declared war on Germany on April 4th, 1917. Despite the National Defense Act of 1916 and Naval Act of 1916, Amer-



ica faced a war three thousand miles away with a small and unprepared military. The United States was unprepared in nearly every respect for modern war. Considerable time elapsed before an effective Army and Navy could be assembled, trained, equipped, and deployed to the Western Front in Europe. The process of building the Army and Navy for the war proved to be different from previous American conflicts and counter to the European military experience. Unlike the largest European military powers of Germany, France, and Austria-Hungary, no tradition existed in the United States to maintain large standing armed forces or trained military reserves during peacetime. Moreover, there was no American counterpart to the European practice of rapidly equipping, training, and mobilizing reservists and conscripts.

America relied solely on traditional volunteerism to fill the ranks of the armed forces. Notions of patriotic duty and adventure appealed to many young men who not only volunteered for wartime service, but sought and paid for their own training at Army



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camps before the war. American labor organizations favored voluntary service over conscription. Labor leader Samuel Gompers argued for volunteerism in letters to the Congressional committees considering the question. “The organized labor movement,” he wrote, “has always been fundamentally opposed to compulsion.” Referring to American values as a role model for others, he continued, “It is the hope of organized labor to demonstrate that under voluntary conditions and institutions the Republic of the United States can mobilize its greatest strength, resources and efficiency.”

Though some observers believed that opposition to conscription might lead to civil disturbances, Congress quickly instituted a reasonably equitable and locally administered system to draft men for the military. On May 18, 1917, Congress approved the Selective Service Act, and President Wilson signed it into action a week later. The new legislation avoided the unpopular system of bonuses and substitutes used during the Civil War and was generally received without serious objection by the American people.

The conscription act initially required men from ages 21 to 30 to register for compulsory military service. The basic requirement for the military was to demonstrate a competitive level of physical fitness. These tests offered the emerging fields of social science a range of data collection tools and new screening methods. The Army Medical Department examined the general condition of young American



Moments like this – with the Boy Scouts of America charging up Fifth Avenue in New York City with flags in their hands – signaled to Americans that it was time to wake up to the reality of war and support the effort in any way possible. “Wake Up, America” parades like this one were throughout the country in support of recruitment. Nearly 60,000 people attended this single parade in New York City. Photograph from National Geographic Magazine, 1917. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boy\\_Scouts\\_NGM-v31-p359.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boy_Scouts_NGM-v31-p359.jpg).

men selected for service from the population. The Surgeon General compiled his findings from draft records in the 1919 report, “Defects Found in Drafted Men,” a snapshot of the 2.5 million men examined for military service. Of that group, 1,533,937 physical defects were recorded (often more than one per individual). More than thirty-four percent of those examined were rejected for service or later discharged for neurological, psychiatric, or mental deficiencies.

To provide a basis for the neurological, psychiatric, or mental evaluations, the Army assessed eligibility for service and aptitude for advanced training through the use of cognitive skills tests to determine intelligence. About 1.9 million men were tested on intelligence. Soldiers who were literate took the Army Alpha test. Illiterates and non-English speaking immigrants took the non-verbal equivalent, the Army Beta test, which relied on visual testing procedures. Robert M. Yerkes,

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president of the American Psychological Association and chairman of the Committee on the Psychological Examination of Recruits, developed and analyzed the tests. His data suggested that the mental age of recruits, in particular immigrant recruits from southern and eastern Europe, averaged about thirteen years. As a eugenicist, he interpreted the results as roughly equivalent to a mild level of retardation and as an indication of racial deterioration. Many years later, experts agreed the results misrepresented the levels of education for the recruits and revealed defects in the design of the tests.

The experience of service in the Army expanded many individual social horizons as natives and immigrants joined the ranks. Immigrants had been welcomed into Union ranks during the Civil War with large numbers of Irish and Germans who had joined and fought alongside native born men. Some Germans in the Civil War fought in units where German was the main language. Between 1917 and 1918, the Army accepted immigrants with some hesitancy because of the widespread public agitation against “hyphenated Americans” that demanded they conform without delay or reservation. However, if the Army appeared concerned about the level of assimilation and loyalty of recent immigrants, some social mixtures simply could not be tolerated within the ranks.

Prevailing racial attitudes mandated the assignment of white and black soldiers to different units. Despite racial discrimination and Jim Crow, many black

American leaders, such as W. E. B. DuBois, supported the war effort and sought a place at the front for black soldiers. Black leaders viewed military service as an opportunity to demonstrate to white society the willingness and ability of black men to assume all duties and responsibilities of citizens, including the wartime sacrifice. If black soldiers were drafted and fought and died on equal footing with white soldiers, then white Americans would see that they deserved to full citizenship. The War Department, however, barred black troops from combat specifically to avoid racial tensions. The military relegated black soldiers to segregated service units where they worked in logistics and supply and as general laborers.

In France, the experiences of black soldiers during training and periods of leave broadened their understanding of the Allies and life in Europe. The Army often restricted the privileges of black soldiers to ensure the conditions they encountered in Europe did not lead them to question their place in American society. However, black soldiers were not the only ones feared to be at risk by the temptations of European vice. To ensure that American “doughboys” did not compromise their special identity as men of the new world who arrived to save the old, several religious and progressive organizations created an extensive program designed to keep the men pure of heart, mind, and body. With assistance from the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and other temperance organizations, the War Department put together a program of schools, sightseeing tours,

## WORLD WAR I AND IT'S AFTERMATH

and recreational facilities to provide wholesome and educational outlets. The soldiers welcomed most of the activities from these groups, but many still managed to find and enjoy the traditional recreational venues of soldiers at war.

While the War and Navy Departments initiated recruitment and mobilization plans for millions of men, women reacted to the war preparations by joining several military and civilian organizations. Their enrollment and actions in these organizations proved to be a pioneering effort for American women in war. Military leaders authorized the permanent gender transition of several occupations that gave women opportunities to don uniforms where none had existed before in history. Civilian wartime organizations, although chaired by male members of the business elite, boasted all-female volunteer workforces. Women performed the bulk of volunteer charitable work during the war.

The military faced great upheaval with the admittance of women in the war. The War and Navy Departments authorized the enlistment of women to fill positions in several established administrative occupations. The gendered transition of these jobs freed more men to join combat units. Army women served as telephone operators (Hello Girls) for the Signal Corps, Navy women enlisted as Yeomen (clerical workers), and the first groups of women joined the Marine Corps in July 1918. For the military medical professions, approximately 25,000 nurses served in the Army and



*Propagandistic images increased patriotism in a public relatively detached from events taking place overseas. This photograph, showing two United States soldiers sprinting past the bodies of two German soldiers toward a bunker, showed Americans the heroism evinced by their men in uniform. Likely a staged image taken after fighting ending, it nonetheless played on the public's patriotism, telling them to step up and support the troops. "At close grips with the Hun, we bomb the corkshaffer's, etc.," c. 1922?. [Library of Congress](#).*

Navy Nurse Corps for duty stateside and overseas, and about a hundred female physicians were contracted by the Army. Neither the female nurses nor the doctors served as commissioned officers in the military. The Army and Navy chose to appoint them instead which left the status of professional medical women hovering somewhere between the enlisted and officer ranks. As a result, many female nurses and doctors suffered various physical and mental abuses at the hands of their male coworkers with no system of redress in place.

The experiences of women in civilian organizations proved to be less stressful than in the military. Millions of women volunteered with the American Red Cross, the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA), and the Salvation Army. Most women performed their volunteer duties in communal spaces owned by the leaders of the municipal chapters of these organizations. Women

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met at designated times to roll bandages, prepare and serve meals and snacks, package and ship supplies, and organize community fundraisers. The variety of volunteer opportunities that existed gave women the ability to appear in public spaces and promote charitable activities for the war effort. Women volunteers encouraged entire communities, including children, to get involved in war work. While most of these efforts focused on support for the home front, a small percentage of women volunteers served with the American Expeditionary Force in France.

Jim Crow segregation in both the military and the civilian sector stood as a barrier for black women who wanted to give their time to the war effort. The military prohibited black women from serving as enlisted or appointed medical personnel. The only avenue for black women to wear a military uniform existed with the armies of the allied nations. A few black female doctors and nurses joined the French Foreign Legion to escape the racism in the American Army. Black women volunteers faced the same discrimination in civilian wartime organizations. White leaders of American Red Cross, YMCA/YWCA, and Salvation Army municipal chapters refused to admit them as equal participants. Black women were forced to charter auxiliary units as subsidiary divisions to the chapters and given little guidance in which to organize fellow volunteers. They turned instead to the community for support and recruited millions of women for auxiliaries that supported the nearly 200,000 black soldiers and sailors serving in the military. While the

majority of women volunteers labored to care for black families on the homefront, three YMCA secretaries received the opportunity of a lifetime to work with the black troops in France.

## V. On the Homefront

In the early years of the war, Americans were generally detached from the events in Europe. The population paired their horror of war accounts with gratitude for the economic opportunities provided by the war and pride in a national tradition of non-involvement with the kind of entangling alliances that had caused the current war. Progressive Era reform politics dominated the political landscape, and Americans remained most concerned with domestic issues and the shifting role of government at home. However, the facts of the war could not be ignored by the public. The destruction taking place on European battlefields and the ensuing casualty rates indicated the unprecedented brutality of modern warfare. Increasingly, a sense that the fate of the Western world lay in the victory or defeat of the Allies.

President Wilson, a committed progressive, had articulated a global vision of democracy even as he embraced neutrality. And as war continued to engulf Europe, it seemed apparent that the United States' economic power would shape the outcome of the conflict regardless of any American military intervention. By 1916, American trade with the Allies tripled while trade with the Central Powers shrunk

# WORLD WAR I AND IT'S AFTERMATH

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astronomically, to less than one percent of previous levels.

The progression of the war in Europe generated fierce national debates about military preparedness. The Allies and the Central Powers had taken little time to raise and mobilize vast armies and navies. By comparison, the United States still fielded a minuscule army and had limited federal power to summon an adequate defense force before the enactment of conscription. When America entered the war, mobilization of military resources and the cultivation of popular support for the war consumed the country. Because the federal government had lacked the coercive force to mobilize before the war, the American war effort was marked by enormous publicity and propaganda campaigns. President Wilson went to extreme measures to push public opinion towards the war. Most notably, he created the Committee on Public Information, known as the “Creel Committee,” headed by Progressive George Creel, to enflame the patriotic mood of the country and generate support for military adventures abroad. Creel enlisted the help of Hollywood studios and other budding media outlets to cultivate a view of the war that pit democracy against imperialism, that framed America as crusading nation endeavoring to rescue Western civilization from medievalism and militarism. As war passions flared, challenges to the onrushing patriotic sentiment that America was making the world “safe for democracy” were labeled disloyal. Wilson signed the Espionage Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act in 1918, stripping

dissenters and protesters of their rights to publicly resist the war. Critics and protesters were imprisoned. Immigrants, labor unions, and political radicals became targets of government investigations and an ever more hostile public culture. Meanwhile, the government insisted that individual financial contributions made a discernible difference for the men on the Western Front. Americans lent their financial support to the war effort by purchasing war bonds or supporting Liberty Loan Drive. Many Americans, however, sacrificed much more than money.

## VI. Before the Armistice

The brutality of war persevered as European powers struggled to adapt to modern war. Until the spring of 1917, the Allies possessed few effective defensive measures against submarine attacks. German submarines sank more than a thousand ships by the time America entered the war. The rapid addition of American naval escorts to the British surface fleet and the establishment of a convoy system countered much of the effect of German submarines. Shipping and military losses declined rapidly, just as the American Army arrived in Europe in large numbers. Although much of the equipment still needed to make the transatlantic passage, the physical presence of the Army proved to a fatal blow to German war plans.

In July 1917, after one last disastrous offensive against the Germans, the Russian army disintegrated. The tsarist regime collapsed and in November 1917



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Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik party came to power. Russia soon surrendered to German demands and exited the war, freeing Germany to finally fight the one-front war it had desired since 1914. The German general staff quickly shifted hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the eastern theater in preparation for a new series of offensives planned for the following year in France.

In March 1918, Germany launched the Kaiserschlacht (Spring Offensive), a series of five major attacks. By the middle of July 1918, each and every one had failed to break through on the Western Front. A string of Allied offensives commenced on the Western Front On August 8, 1918. The two million men of the American Expeditionary Force joined British and French armies in a series of successful counter offensives that pushed the disintegrating German front lines back across France. German General Erich Ludendorff referred to launch of the counteroffensive as the "black day of the German army." The German offensive gamble exhausted Germany's faltering military effort. Defeat was inevitable. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated at the request of the German general staff and the new German democratic government agreed to an armistice (cease fire) on November 11, 1918. German military forces withdrew from France and Belgium and returned to a Germany teetering on the brink of chaos.

By the end of the war, more than 4.7 had million American men served in all branches of the military:



*The large numbers of German immigrants living throughout the United States created suspicion within the federal government. The American Protective League, a group of private citizens, worked directly with the U.S. government during WWI to identify suspected German sympathizers. Additionally, they sought to eradicate all radical, anarchical, left-wing, and anti-war activities through surveillance and raids. Even Herbert Hoover, the infamous head of the FBI, used the APL to gather intelligence. A membership card in the American Protective League, issued 28 May 1918. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:APL-Membership-Card.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:APL-Membership-Card.png).*

four million in the Army, six hundred thousand in the Navy, and about eighty thousand in the Marine Corps. The United States lost over 100,000 men (Fifty-three thousand died in battle, and even more from disease). Their terrible sacrifice, however, paled before the Europeans'. After four years of brutal stalemate, France had suffered almost a million and a half military dead and Germany even more. Both nations lost about 4% of its population to the war. And death was not done.

## VII. The War and the Influenza Pandemic

Even as war raged on the Western Front, a new deadly threat loomed: influenza. In the spring of 1918, a strain of the "flu" virus appeared in the farm country of Haskell County, Kansas, and hit nearby Camp

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Funston, one of the largest Army training camps in the nation. The virus spread like a wildfire. The camp brought disparate populations together, shuffled them between bases, sent them back to their homes across the nation, and, in consecutive waves, deployed them around the world. Between March and May 1918, fourteen of the largest American military training camps reported outbreaks of influenza. Some of the infected soldiers carried the virus on troop transports to France. By September 1918, influenza spread to all training camps in the United States. And then it mutated into a deadlier version.

The second wave of the virus, a mutated strain, was even deadlier than the first. It struck down those in the prime of their lives: a disproportionate amount of influenza victims were between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. In Europe, influenza hit both sides of the Western Front. The “Spanish Influenza,” or the “Spanish Lady,” misnamed due to accounts of the disease that first appeared in the uncensored newspapers of neutral Spain, resulted in the deaths of an estimated fifty million people worldwide. Reports from the Surgeon General of the Army revealed that while 227,000 soldiers were hospitalized from wounds received in battle, almost half a million suffered from influenza. The worst part of the epidemic struck during the height of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the fall of 1918 and compromised the combat capabilities of the American and German armies. During the war, more soldiers died from influenza than combat. The pandemic continued to spread after the Armistice

before finally fading in the early 1920s. No cure was ever found.

## VIII. The Fourteen Points and the League of Nations

As the flu virus wracked the world, Europe and America rejoiced at the end of hostilities. On December 4, 1918, President Wilson became the first American president to leave the country during his term. He intended to shape the peace. The war brought an abrupt end to four great European imperial powers. The German, Russian, Austrian-Hungarian and Ottoman empires evaporated and the map of Europe was redrawn to accommodate new independent nations. As part of the terms of the Armistice, Allied forces followed the retreating Germans and occupied territories in the Rhineland to prevent Germany from reigniting war. As Germany disarmed, Wilson and the other Allied leaders gathered in France at Versailles for the Paris Peace Conference to dictate the terms of a settlement to the war.

Earlier that year, on January 8, 1918, before a joint session of Congress, President Wilson offered an enlightened statement of war aims and peace terms known as the Fourteen Points. The plan not only dealt with territorial issues but offered principles upon which a long-term peace could be built, including the establishment of a League of Nations to guard against future wars. But in January 1918 Germany still anticipated a favorable verdict on the battlefield and

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did not seriously consider accepting the terms of the Fourteen Points. The initial reaction from Germany seemed even more receptive than the Allies. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau remarked, “The good Lord only had ten (points).”

President Wilson toiled for his vision of the post-war world. The United States had entered the fray, Wilson proclaimed, “to make the world safe for democracy.” At the center of the plan was a novel international organization—the League of Nations—charged with keeping a worldwide peace by preventing the kind of destruction that tore across Europe and “affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” This promise of collective security, that an attack on one sovereign member would be viewed as an attack on all, was a key component of the Fourteen Points.

But the fight for peace was daunting. While President Wilson was celebrated in Europe and welcomed as the “God of Peace,” his fellow statesmen were less enthusiastic about his plans for post-war Europe. America’s closest allies had little interest in the League of Nations. Allied leaders sought to guarantee the future safety of their own nations. Unlike the United States, the Allies endured firsthand the horrors of the war. They refused to sacrifice further. The negotiations made clear that British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George was more interested in preserving Britain’s imperial domain, while French

Prime Minister Clemenceau sought a peace that recognized the Allies’ victory and the Central Powers’ culpability: he wanted reparations—severe financial penalties—and limits on Germany’s future ability to wage war. The fight for the League of Nations was therefore largely on the shoulders of President Wilson. By June 1919, the final version of the treaty was signed and President Wilson was able to return home. The treaty was a compromise that included demands for German reparations, provisions for the League of Nations, and the promise of collective security. For President Wilson, it was an imperfect peace, but better than no peace at all.

The real fight for the League of Nations was on the American homefront. Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts stood as the most prominent opponent of the League of Nations. As chair of the Senator Foreign Relations Committee and an influential Republican Party leader, he could block ratification of the treaty. Lodge attacked the treaty for potentially robbing the United States of its sovereignty. Never an isolationist, Lodge demanded instead that the country deal with its own problems in its own way, free from the collective security—and oversight—offered by the League of Nations. Unable to match Lodge’s influence the Senate, President Wilson took his case to the American people in the hopes that ordinary voters might be convinced that the only guarantee of future world peace was the League of Nations. During his grueling cross-country trip,

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however, President Wilson suffered an incapacitating stroke. His opponents had the upper hand.

President Wilson's dream for the League of Nations died on the floor of the Senate. Lodge's opponents successfully blocked America's entry into the League of Nations, an organization conceived and championed by the American president. The League of Nations operated with fifty-eight sovereign members, but the United States refused to join, refused to lend it American power, and refused to provide it with the power needed to fulfill its purpose.

## IX. Aftermath of World War I

The war transformed the world. It drastically changed the face of the Middle East, for instance. For centuries the Ottoman Empire had shaped life in the region. Before the war, the Middle East had three main centers of power: Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran. President Wilson's call for self-determination appealed to many under the Ottoman Empire's rule. In the aftermath of the war, Wilson sent a commission to investigate the region to determine the conditions and aspirations of the populace. The King-Crane Commission found that most of the inhabitants favored an independent state free of European control. However, these wishes were largely ignored, and the lands of the former Ottoman Empire divided into mandates through the Treaty of Sevres at the San Remo Conference in 1920. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated into

several nations, many created in part without regard to ethnic realities by European powers. These Arab provinces were ruled by Britain and France, and the new nation of Turkey emerged from the former heartland of Anatolia. According to the League of Nations, mandates "were inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world." Though allegedly for the benefit of the people of the Middle East, the mandate system was essentially a reimagined form of nineteenth-century imperialism. France received Syria; Britain took control of Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan (Jordan). The United States was asked to become a mandate power, but declined. The geographical realignment of the Middle East also included the formation of two new nations: the Kingdom of Hejaz and Yemen. (The Kingdom of Hejaz was ruled by Sharif Hussein and only lasted until the 1920s when it became part of Saudi Arabia.)

The fates of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-born anarchists who were convicted of robbery and murder in 1920, reflected the Red Scare in American society that followed the Russian Revolution in 1917. Their arrest, trial, and execution inspired many leftists and dissenting artists to express their sympathy with the accused, such as in Maxwell Anderson's *Gods of the Lightning* or Upton Sinclair's *Boston*. The Sacco-Vanzetti demonstrated a newly exacerbated American nervousness about immigrants' and the potential spread of radical ideas,

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especially those related to international communism after the Russian Revolution.

When in March 1918 the Bolsheviks signed a separate peace treaty with Germany, the Allies planned to send troops to northern Russia and Siberia prevent German influence and fight the Bolshevik revolution. Wilson agreed, and, in a little-known foreign intervention, American troops remained in Russia as late as 1920. Although the Bolshevik rhetoric of self-determination followed many of the ideals of Wilson's Fourteen Points—Vladimir Lenin supported revolutions against imperial rule across the world—imperialism and anti-communism could not be so easily undone by vague ideas of self-rule.

At home, the United States grappled with harsh postwar realities. Racial tensions culminated in the Red Summer of 1919 when violence broke out in at least twenty-five cities, including Chicago and Washington, D.C. The riots originated from wartime racial tensions. Industrial war production and massive wartime service created vast labor shortages and thousands of southern blacks traveled to the North and Midwest to escape the traps of southern poverty. But the so-called Great Migration sparked significant racial conflict as local whites and returning veterans fought to reclaim their jobs and their neighborhoods from new black migrants.

But many black Americans, who had fled the Jim Crow South and traveled halfway around the world



*While still fighting in WWI, President Wilson sent American troops to Siberia during the Russian Civil War for reasons both diplomatic and military. This photograph shows American soldiers in Vladivostok parading before the building occupied by the staff of the Czecho-Slovaks (those opposing the Bolsheviks). To the left, Japanese marines stand to attention as the American troops march. Photograph, August 1, 1918. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American_troops_in_Vladivostok_1918_HD-SN-99-02013.JPEG), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American\\_troops\\_in\\_Vladivostok\\_1918\\_HD-SN-99-02013.JPEG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American_troops_in_Vladivostok_1918_HD-SN-99-02013.JPEG).*

to fight for the United States, would not so easily accede to postwar racism. The overseas experience of black Americans and their return triggered a dramatic change in black communities. W.E.B. DuBois wrote boldly of returning soldiers: “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy!” But white Americans desired a return to the status quo, a world that did not include social, political, or economic equality for black people.

In 1919, America suffered through the “Red Summer.” Riots erupted across the country from April until October. The massive bloodshed during included thousands of injuries, hundreds of deaths, and a vast destruction of private and public property across the nation. The Chicago Riot, from July 27 to August 3, 1919, considered the summer's worst, sparked a week of mob violence, murder, and arson. Race riots had rocked the nation, but the Red Summer was



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something new. Recently empowered blacks actively defended their families and homes, often with militant force. This behavior galvanized many in black communities, but it also shocked white Americans who alternatively interpreted black resistance as a desire for total revolution or as a new positive step in the path toward black civil rights. In the riots' aftermath, James Weldon Johnson wrote, "Can't they understand that the more Negroes they outrage, the more determined the whole race becomes to secure the full rights and privileges of freemen?" Those six hot months in 1919 forever altered American society and roused and terrified those that experienced the sudden and devastating outbreaks of violence.

which the world traveled to a new and uncertain future.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

### X. Conclusion

World War I decimated millions and profoundly altered the course of world history. Postwar instabilities led directly toward a global depression and a second world war. The war sparked the Bolshevik revolution that the United States later engaged in Cold War. It created Middle Eastern nations and aggravated ethnic tensions that the United States could never tackle.

By fighting with and against European powers on the Western Front, America's place in the world was never the same. By whipping up nationalist passions, American attitudes toward radicalism, dissent, and immigration were poisoned. Postwar disillusionment shattered Americans' hopes for the progress of the modern world. The war came and went, and left in its place the bloody wreckage of an old world through

# UNIT 6

## TIMELINE

| World War I Timeline: 1914-1920 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1914                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>World War I</b> started in Europe, and <b>President Woodrow Wilson</b> announced US neutrality.</li> </ul>   |
| 1915                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lusitania</b> sunk by German U-boats.</li> </ul>   |
| 1916                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pancho Villa</b> raided New Mexico and US military pursued his forces.</li> <li>• Woodrow Wilson reelected president.</li> </ul>   |
| 1917                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Defense Act</b> established to prepare America for war if needed.</li> <li>• <b>Zimmerman Note</b> (telegram) from German to Mexico intercepted by the US.</li> <li>• German <b>U-boat</b> attacks continued unrestricted.</li> <li>• United States declared war on Germany.</li> <li>• <b>Committee on Public Information</b> or Creel Committee established, headed by <b>George Creel</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Selective Service Act</b> passed.</li> <li>• <b>Espionage Act</b> and Trading with the Enemy Act passed.</li> <li>• <b>Bolshevik Revolution</b> started in Russia, leading to the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).</li> </ul> |
| 1918                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilson announced his <b>Fourteen Points</b> in a speech.</li> <li>• Russia made peace with the Germans and ended its involvement in World War I.</li> <li>• <b>Sedition Act</b> passed.</li> <li>• US troops started to see combat.</li> <li>• In November, an armistice was signed, ending World War I.</li> </ul>   |
| 1919                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eighteenth Amendment</b> to the Constitution (prohibition) ratified.</li> <li>• Wilson attended the Paris Peace Conference that produced the <b>Treaty of Versailles</b>.</li> <li>• Labor strikes broke out at steel mills throughout the Midwest.</li> </ul>   |
| 1919-1920                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Palmer Raids</b> conducted.</li> </ul>   |
| 1920                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The American Civil Liberties Union</b> was founded.</li> <li>• Senate voted against the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and the <b>League of Nations</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nineteenth Amendment</b> (women's suffrage) ratified.</li> <li>• <b>Warren G. Harding</b> elected president.</li> </ul>   |

## The 1920's in Theme Analysis

The 1920s were a retreat from the Progressive Era. This is an important concept to understand. The public was disillusioned by the experience of World War One and Wilsonian progressivism. To many people, the Progressives had taken the nation too far into the international scene and had given the federal government too much power. The nation retreated into itself, trying to recover from the devastation of war and the changes it brought economically, politically, socially, and technologically. During the decade, the nation became fixated with consumerism, partying, hero-worship, isolationism, anti-progressivism, youth culture, extravagance, mobility, and intellectualism. However, 1920s Americans actually were more conservative than the generation before them. They idealized sameness throughout society, and anyone who was not white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant was rejected, tormented, abused, and discriminated against. Overall, the era only was “progressive” in terms of consumerism, technology, business, fashion, and a new morality. The political “scale,” that we discuss in this class, “wobbled” toward the hands-off side, after a generation of leaning toward the hands-on side. But, the conservative attitude toward the role of the federal government was not matched with fiscal frugality. Due to the excess in consumer spending and over-speculation of the decade, the scale literally “crashed down” in 1929 on the hands-on side, with the federal government taking control over major aspects of life and the economy. Rely on the textbook for the content to apply to the theme.

## Lynching in America 1900-1931

Lynching was a symptom of American culture at the time. As part of the “Americanism” of the day, anything that wasn’t white, Anglo-Saxon, or Protestant (WASP) was a blight on America. This meant to mainstream whites that blacks, Eastern Europeans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, Jews, Catholics, Hindus, Muslims, etc... or any combination thereof were all by nature anti-American & thus undesirable in the United States. The view was that the only true American was someone who was WASP. The Klan (KKK) focused on that brand of Americanism, specifically, but it was broad view emphasized in society even outside of the Klan. It is a view that prevailed through the 20th century.

## The Decade's Trends

### Automobile:

In addition to the Flapper, the automobile became a symbol of the 1920s. Apart from the fact that the automobile industry provided jobs, it also impacted the ways in which society functioned, in particular it increased mobility. It created new service industries such as: road construction and maintenance, hotels/motels, service stations, auto dealers/mechanics, roadside dinners, travel agencies, billboards, auto insurance and licensing. It also changed the time for travel, making it faster and easier, and the automobile became a status symbol that was associated with style, sophistication, wealth, materialism, and pro-

# UNIT 7

## 1920's

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ess. Automotive technology was adapted for use on the farm and for service vehicles. Urban development became linked to the use of the car, as cities expanded outward, street cars were replaced, and traffic jams/accidents/laws occurred. The auto was most symbolic of youth, and the impact on youth culture permanently changed the construct of adolescence and early adulthood in society. No longer did young people court, but rather they went out on dates; typically-identified teenaged behaviors were documented, as freedom from parents and other social regulators dropped. As a youth you were considered “cool” and mature if you had a car, and girls and young women who engaged in auto-culture often were considered “wild” or sometimes promiscuous. The fact is that during the 1920s the independence of the automobile combined with youth did lead to higher rates of premarital sex (and related marriages) than in previous eras, but it also was not as “wild” of a time for youth as the elders in society feared.

The Ford Motor company, along with others from Michigan, put the US on the map as the world’s leading auto manufacture. Ford and others played into the psychology of consumption associated with the era, and the yearly output rose in the 1920s from 2 million to 5.5 million cars/year. By the end of the decade, the commonly known statistic was that the ratio of cars to Americans was 1:5. The goal in production for men like Ford was to create affordable vehicles for the average person. In 1926, the Model

T cost around \$290.00, and most Americans bought their cars on credit (or installments). What most of the men associated with the big names in automotive manufacturing did was not, of course, invent the car, but rather build systems or new technologies that improved the machine and/or its manufacturing process.

### **Radio:**

The first commercial radio station, KDKA out of Pittsburgh, PA, went on the air in 1921, and by 1927 sixty-eight commercial stations were in operation. By 1930, about 40% of homes had a radio receiver.

### **Movies:**

In the mid-1920s, most towns had at least one movie theater. By 1922, 40 million people a week went to the movies, and by 1929 that number was up to 80 million per week.

### **Fads:**

Print, movies, and radio as mass-communication dramatically shaped the American consumer culture, which included a number of fads. For example, in 1923, the opening of Tutankhamen’s tomb led to a fad for Egyptian-styled furniture, dress, and accessories. In 1924, crossword puzzles became all the rage, and companies printed crossword dictionaries and produced other, related paraphernalia. In 1926, the same dynamic unfolded for playing bridge, and the card-table became a standard in many homes.

# UNIT 7

## 1920's

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### Fame:

The same forces that created fads also created celebrities and “heroes.” In sports, there was: Lou Gehrig, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Gertrude Ederle. In aviation, there was Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, while in movies there was: Buster Keaton, Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, and Clara Bow (the “it girl”), just to name a few.

### Intellectualism:

Despite the banality of popular culture, the 1920s also was a decade of rich intellectualism, some of which challenged the materialism of the decade. Often associated with the “Lost Generation” a host of writers emerged to the fore during the time. Though women authors like Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein, Katherine Anne Porter were well-known, most of the Lost Generation authors focused on were men. Sinclair Lewis satirized the American middle class in Babbitt. H.L. Mencken’s The American Mercury criticized society. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby looked at the pointless lives of wealthy pleasure seekers. T.S. Elliot wrote poetry about the vacuous nature of modern life in The Wasteland, and a variety of Ernest Hemingway’s books took on modern themes.

### Nativism and Isolationism:

In contrast to the social progressivism that lingered as an undercurrent in society during the 1920s, nativism (in addition to racism) surged during the era. The resurrection of a new version of the Ku Klux Klan,

encouraged in part by the film *The Birth of a Nation*, was symptomatic of the attitudes during the era. The Klan moved northward, particularly into the Midwest, where whole towns, post-World War I became members. The emphasis of the Klan during these years was to promote nationalism, Americanism, and the Klan itself as a business institution that offered insurance policies and other products to members. The Klan though continuing its earlier terrorism against African-Americans from the Era of Reconstruction expanded such to immigrants, especially those from Eastern Europe. In 1928, the Klan held a massive parade in Washington DC, which reflected national attitudes toward minorities and immigrants. Also, reflective of these view was the passage by the federal government in 1924 of the National Origins Act, which established quotas to discourage immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, while allowing those from Scandinavia and Western Europe (“desirable immigrants”) to continue. The federal government also eliminated immigration from Asia. In addition to nativism, Americans also became increasingly isolationist in their foreign views. Feeling tricked and deceived by Europeans in getting into World War I, the public wanted a return to normalcy that put America first, and not the needs of Europe. Americans wanted the Federal Government to avoid entangling military alliances, while instead taking action that would promote free trade and US commercial advantages abroad.



# UNIT 7

## 1920's

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### **Debt and Credit Spending:**

With the exception of a very brief period in the 1830s, America has always been a country with a debt problem, both nationally and for individuals. In the 1920s, though the idea of buying on credit (buy now, pay later), though, became more socially acceptable, due to advertising campaigns that made it so in the public's mind. The average American in the 1920s had little to no savings, and they and the businesses for which they worked and banks with which they did business often bought and sold stock on credit or margin. This spending increased during the decade, artificially inflating the value of stocks and the wealth of individuals, at the same time as the relationship between businesses and government tightened. Some quotes from Calvin Coolidge illustrate this thinking: "the business of America is business" and "the man who builds a factory, builds a temple. The man who works there, worships there."

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

# THE AMERICAN YAWP

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*Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer, 1927.*

## I. Introduction

On a sunny day in early March of 1921, Warren G. Harding took the oath to become the twenty-ninth President of the United States. He had won a landslide election by promising a “return to normalcy.” “Our supreme task is the resumption of our onward, normal way,” he declared in his inaugural address. Two months later, he said, “America’s present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration.” The nation still reeled from the shock of World War I, the explosion of racial violence and political repression in 1919, and, bolstered by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, a lingering “Red Scare.”

More than 115,000 American soldiers had lost their lives in barely a year of fighting in Europe. Between 1918 and 1920, nearly 700,000 Americans died in a flu epidemic that hit nearly twenty percent of the American population. Waves of strikes hit soon after the war. Radicals bellowed. Anarchists and others sent more than thirty bombs through the mail on May 1, 1919. After war controls fell, the economy tanked and national unemployment hit twenty percent. Farmers’ bankruptcy rates, already egregious, now skyrocketed. Harding could hardly deliver the peace that he promised, but his message nevertheless resonated among a populace wracked by instability.

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The 1920s would be anything but “normal.” The decade so reshaped American life that it came to be called by many names: the New Era, the Jazz Age, the Age of the Flapper, the Prosperity Decade, and, most commonly, the Roaring Twenties. The mass production and consumption of automobiles, household appliances, film, and radio fueled a new economy and new standards of living, new mass entertainment introduced talking films and jazz while sexual and social restraints loosened. But at the same time, many Americans turned their back on reform, denounced America’s shifting demographics, stifled immigration, retreated toward “old time religion,” and revived with millions of new members the Ku Klux Klan. Others, meanwhile, fought harder than ever for equal rights. Americans noted the appearance of “the New Woman” and “the New Negro.” Old immigrant communities that had predated the new immigration quotas clung to their cultures and their native faiths. The 1920s were a decade of conflict and tension. And whatever it was, it was not “normalcy.”

## II. Republican White House, 1921-1933

To deliver on his promises of stability and prosperity, Harding signed legislation to restore a high protective tariff and dismantled the last wartime controls over industry. Meanwhile, the vestiges of America’s involvement in the First World War and its propaganda and suspicions of anything less than

“100 percent American,” pushed Congress to address fears of immigration and foreign populations. A sour postwar economy led elites to raise the specter of the Russian Revolution and sideline not just the various American socialist and anarchist organizations, but nearly all union activism. During the 1920s, the labor movement suffered a sharp decline in memberships. Workers not only lost bargaining power, but also the support of courts, politicians, and, in large measure, the American public.

Harding’s presidency, though, would go down in history as among the most corrupt. Many of Harding’s cabinet appointees, for instance, were individuals of true stature that answered to various American constituencies. For instance, Henry C. Wallace, the very vocal editor of *Wallace’s Farmer* and a well-known proponent of “scientific farming,” was made Secretary of Agriculture. Herbert Hoover, the popular head and administrator of the wartime Food Administration and a self-made millionaire, was made Secretary of Commerce. To satisfy business interests, the conservative businessmen Andrew Mellon became Secretary of the Treasury. Mostly, however, it was the appointing of friends and close supporters, dubbed “the Ohio gang,” that led to trouble.

Harding’s administration suffered a tremendous setback when several officials conspired to lease government land in Wyoming to oil companies in exchange for cash. Known as the Teapot Dome scandal (named after the nearby rock formation that

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resembled a teapot), Interior Secretary Albert Fall and Navy Secretary Edwin Denby were eventually convicted and sent to jail. Harding took vacation in the summer of 1923 so that he could think deeply on how to deal “with my God-damned friends”—it was his friends, and not his enemies, that kept him up walking the halls at nights. But then, on August of 1923, Harding died suddenly of a heart attack and Vice President Calvin Coolidge ascended to the highest office in the land.

The son of a shopkeeper, Coolidge climbed the Republican ranks from city councilman to the Governor of Massachusetts. As president, Coolidge sought to remove the stain of scandal but he otherwise continued Harding’s economic approach, refusing to take actions in defense of workers or consumers against American business. “The chief business of the American people,” the new President stated, “is business.” One observer called Coolidge’s policy “active inactivity,” but Coolidge was not afraid of supporting business interests and wealthy Americans by lowering taxes or maintaining high tariff rates. Congress, for instance, had already begun to reduce taxes on the wealthy from wartime levels of sixty-six percent to twenty percent, which Coolidge championed.

While Coolidge supported business, other Americans continued their activism. The 1920s, for instance, represented a time of great activism among American women, who had won the vote with the passage of

the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920. Female voters, like their male counterparts, pursued many interests. Concerned about squalor, poverty, and domestic violence, women had already lent their efforts to prohibition, which went into effect under the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1920. After that point, alcohol could no longer be manufactured or sold. Other reformers urged government action to ameliorate high mortality rates among infants and children, to provide federal aid for education, and ensure peace and disarmament. Some activists advocated protective legislation for women and children, while Alice Paul and the National Women’s Party called for the elimination of all legal distinctions “on account of sex” through the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was introduced but defeated in Congress.

National politics in the 1920s were dominated by the Republican Party, which not held the presidency but both houses of Congress as well. In a note passed to American reporters, Coolidge announced his decision not to run in the presidential election of 1928. Republicans nominated Herbert Hoover. An orphan from Iowa who graduated from Stanford, became wealthy as a mining engineer, and won a deserved reputation as a humanitarian for his relief efforts in famine-struck, war-torn Europe. Running against Hoover was Democrat Alfred E. Smith, the four-time governor of New York and the son of Irish immigrants. Smith was a part of the New York machine and favored workers’ protections while also opposing prohibition and immigration restrictions. Hoover

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focused on economic growth and prosperity. He had served as Secretary of Commerce under Harding and Coolidge and claimed credit for the sustained growth seen during the 1920s, Hoover claimed in 1928 that America had never been closer to eliminating poverty. Much of the election, however, centered around Smith's religion: he was a Catholic. And not only was he a Catholic, he opposed Protestant America's greatest political triumph, prohibition. Many Protestant ministers preached against Smith and warned that he be enthralled to the Pope. Hoover won in a landslide. While Smith won handily in the nation's largest cities, portending future political trends, he lost most of the rest of the country. Even several solidly Democratic southern states pulled the lever for a Republican for the first time since Reconstruction.

### III. Culture of Consumption

"Change is in the very air Americans breathe, and consumer changes are the very bricks out of which we are building our new kind of civilization," announced marketing expert and home economist Christine Frederick in her influential 1929 monograph, *Selling Mrs. Consumer*. The book, which was based on one of the earliest surveys of American buying habits, advised manufacturers and advertisers how to capture the purchasing power of women, who, according to Frederick, accounted for 90% of household expenditures. Aside from granting advertisers insight into the psychology of the "average" consumer, Frederick's text captured the tremendous social and econom-



*During the 1920s, the National Women's Party fought for the rights of women beyond that of suffrage, which they had secured through the 19th Amendment in 1920. They organized private events, like the tea party pictured here, and public campaigning, such as the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment to Congress, as they continued the struggle for equality. "Reception tea at the National Womens [i.e., Woman's] Party to Alice Brady, famous film star and one of the organizers of the party," April 5, 1923. [Library of Congress](#).*

ic transformations that had been wrought over the course of her lifetime.

Indeed, the America of Frederick's birth looked very different from the one she confronted in 1929. The consumer change she studied had resulted from the industrial expansion of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. With the discovery of new energy sources and manufacturing technologies, industrial output flooded the market with a range of consumer products such as ready-to-wear clothing to convenience foods to home appliances. By the end of the nineteenth century, output had risen so dramatically that many contemporaries feared supply had outpaced demand and that the nation would soon face the devastating financial consequences



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of overproduction. American businessmen attempted to avoid this catastrophe by developing new merchandising and marketing strategies that transformed distribution and stimulated a new culture of consumer desire.

The department store stood at the center of this early consumer revolution. By the 1880s, several large dry goods houses blossomed into modern retail department stores. These emporiums concentrated a broad array of goods under a single roof, allowing customers to purchase shirtwaists and gloves alongside toy trains and washbasins. To attract customers, department stores relied on more than variety. They also employed innovations in service—such as access to restaurants, writing rooms, and babysitting—and spectacle—such as elaborately decorated store windows, fashion shows, and interior merchandise displays. Marshall Field & Co. was among the most successful of these ventures. Located on State Street in Chicago, the company pioneered many of these strategies, including establishing a tearoom that provided refreshment to the well-heeled women shoppers that comprised the store's clientele. Reflecting on the success of Field's marketing techniques, Thomas W. Goodspeed, an early trustee of the University of Chicago wrote, "Perhaps the most notable of Mr. Field's innovations was that he made a store in which it was a joy to buy."

The joy of buying infected a growing number of Americans in the early twentieth century as the rise of

mail-order catalogs, mass-circulation magazines, and national branding further stoked consumer desire. The automobile industry also fostered the new culture of consumption by promoting the use of credit. By 1927, more than sixty percent of American automobiles were sold on credit, and installment purchasing was made available for nearly every other large consumer purchase. Spurred by access to easy credit, consumer expenditures for household appliances, for example, grew by more than 120 percent between 1919 and 1929. Henry Ford's assembly line, which advanced production strategies practiced within countless industries, brought automobiles within the reach of middle-income Americans and further drove the spirit of consumerism. By 1925, Ford's factories were turning out a Model-T every 10 seconds. The number of registered cars ballooned from just over nine million in 1920 to nearly twenty-seven million by the decade's end. Americans owned more cars than Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy combined. In the late 1920s, eighty percent of the world's cars drove on American roads.

## IV. Culture of Escape

As transformative as steam and iron had been in the previous century, gasoline and electricity—embodied most dramatically for many Americans in automobiles, film, and radio—propelled not only consumption, but also the famed popular culture in the 1920s. "We wish to escape," wrote Edgar Burroughs, author of the Tarzan series. "The restrictions of manmade

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laws, and the inhibitions that society has placed upon us.” Burroughs authored a new Tarzan story nearly every year from 1914 until 1939. “We would each like to be Tarzan,” he said. “At least I would; I admit it.” Like many Americans in the 1920s, Burroughs sought to challenge and escape the constraints of a society that seemed more industrialized with each passing day.

Just like Burroughs, Americans escaped with great speed. Whether through the automobile, Hollywood’s latest films, jazz records produced on Tin Pan Alley, or the hours spent listening to radio broadcasts of Jack Dempsey’s prizefights, the public wrapped itself in popular culture. One observer estimated that Americans belted out the silly musical hit “Yes, We Have No Bananas” more than “The Star Spangled Banner” and all the hymns in all the hymnals combined.

As the automobile became more popular and more reliable, more people traveled more frequently and attempted greater distances. Women increasingly drove themselves to their own activities as well as those of their children. Vacationing Americans sped to Florida to escape northern winters. Young men and women fled the supervision of courtship, exchanging the staid parlor couch for sexual exploration in the backseat of a sedan. In order to serve and capture the growing number of drivers, Americans erected gas stations, diners, motels, and billboards along the roadside. Automobiles themselves became objects of



*The automobile changed American life forever. Rampant consumerism, the desire to travel, and the affordability of cars allowed greater numbers of Americans to purchase automobiles. This was possible only through innovations in automobile design and manufacturing led by Henry Ford in Detroit, Michigan. Ford was a lifelong inventor, creating his very first automobile – the quadricycle – in his home garage. From *The Truth About Henry Ford* by Sarah T. Bushnell, 1922. [Wikimedia](#).*

entertainment: nearly one hundred thousand people gathered to watch drivers compete for the \$50,000 prize of the Indianapolis 500.

Meanwhile, the United States dominated the global film industry. By 1930, as movie-making became more expensive, a handful of film companies took control of the industry. Immigrants, mostly of Jewish heritage from Central and Eastern Europe, originally “invented Hollywood” because most turn-of-the-century middle and upper class Americans viewed cinema as lower-class entertainment. After their parents emigrated from Poland in 1876, Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Warner (who were given the name when an Ellis Island official could not understand their surname) founded Warner Bros. in 1918. Universal, Paramount, Columbia, and MGM were all founded by or led by Jewish executives. Aware of their social status as outsiders, these immigrants (or

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sons of immigrants) purposefully produced films that portrayed American values of opportunity, democracy, and freedom.

Not content with distributing thirty-minute films in nickelodeons, film moguls produced longer, higher-quality films and showed them in palatial theaters that attracted those who had previously shunned the film industry. But as filmmakers captured the middle and upper classes, they maintained working-class moviegoers by blending traditional and modern values. Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments* depicted orgiastic revelry, for instance, while still managing to celebrate a biblical story. But what good was a silver screen in a dingy theater? Moguls and entrepreneurs soon constructed picture palaces. Samuel Rothafel's Roxy Theater in New York held more than six thousand patrons who could be escorted by a uniformed usher past gardens and statues to their cushioned seat. In order to show *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first movie with synchronized words and pictures, the Warners spent half a million to equip two theaters. "Sound is a passing fancy," one MGM producer told his wife, but Warner Bros.' assets, which increased from just \$5,000,000 in 1925 to \$230,000,000 in 1930, tell a different story.

Americans fell in love with the movies. Whether it was the surroundings, the sound, or the production budgets, weekly movie attendance skyrocketed from sixteen million in 1912 to forty million in the

early 1920s. Hungarian immigrant William Fox, founder of Fox Film Corporation, declared that "the motion picture is a distinctly American institution" because "the rich rub elbows with the poor" in movie theaters. With no seating restriction, the one-price admission was accessible for nearly all Americans (African Americans, however, were either excluded or segregated). Women represented more than sixty percent of moviegoers, packing theaters to see Mary Pickford, nicknamed "America's Sweetheart," who was earning one million dollars a year by 1920 through a combination of film and endorsements contracts. Pickford and other female stars popularized the "flapper," a woman who favored short skirts, makeup, and cigarettes.

As Americans went to the movies more and more, at home they had the radio. Italian scientist Guglielmo Marconi transmitted the first transatlantic wireless (radio) message in 1901, but radios in the home did not become available until around 1920, when they boomed across the country. Around half of American homes contained a radio by 1930. Radio stations brought entertainment directly into the living room through the sale of advertisements and sponsorships, from *The Maxwell House Hour* to the *Lucky Strike Orchestra*. Soap companies sponsored daytime dramas so frequently that an entire genre—"soap operas"—was born, providing housewives with audio adventures that stood in stark contrast to common chores. Though radio stations were often under the control of corporations like the National Broadcasting

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Company (NBC) or the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), radio programs were less constrained by traditional boundaries in order to capture as wide an audience as possible, spreading popular culture on a national level.

Radio exposed Americans to a broad array of music. Jazz, a uniquely American musical style popularized by the African-American community in New Orleans, spread primarily through radio stations and records. The *New York Times* had ridiculed jazz as “savage” because of its racial heritage, but the music represented cultural independence to others. As Harlem-based musician William Dixon put it, “It did seem, to a little boy, that . . . white people really owned everything. But that wasn’t entirely true. They didn’t own the music that I played.” The fast-paced and spontaneity-laced tunes invited the listener to dance along. “When a good orchestra plays a ‘rag,’” dance instructor Vernon Castle recalled, “One has simply got to move.” Jazz became a national sensation, played and heard by whites and blacks both. Jewish Lithuanian-born singer Al Jolson—whose biography inspired *The Jazz Singer* and who played the film’s titular character—became the most popular singer in America.

The 1920s also witnessed the maturation of professional sports. Play-by-play radio broadcasts of major collegiate and professional sporting events marked a new era for sports, despite the institutionalization of racial segregation in most.



Mary Pickford's film personas led the glamorous and lavish lifestyle that female movie-goers of the 1920s desired so much. Mary Pickford, 1920. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003666664>.

Suddenly, Jack Dempsey's left crosses and right uppercuts could almost be felt in homes across the United States. Dempsey, who held the heavyweight championship for most of the decade, drew million-dollar gates and inaugurated “Dempseymania” in newspapers across the country. Red Grange, who carried the football with a similar recklessness, helped to popularize professional football, which was then in the shadow of the college game. Grange left the University of Illinois before graduating to join the

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Chicago Bears in 1925. “There had never been such evidence of public interest since our professional league began,” recalled Bears owner George Halas of Grange’s arrival.

Perhaps no sports figure left a bigger mark than did Babe Ruth. Born George Herman Ruth, the “Sultan of Swat” grew up in an orphanage in Baltimore’s slums. Ruth’s emergence onto the national scene was much needed, as the baseball world had been rocked by the so-called black Sox scandal in which eight players allegedly agreed to throw the 1919 World Series. Ruth hit fifty-four home runs in 1920, which was more than any other team combined. Baseball writers called Ruth a superman, and more Americans could recognize Ruth than they could then-president Warren G. Harding.

After an era of destruction and doubt brought about by the First World War, Americans craved heroes that seemed to defy convention and break boundaries. Dempsey, Grange, and Ruth dominated their respective sport, but only Charles Lindbergh conquered the sky. On May 21, 1927, Lindbergh concluded the first ever non-stop solo flight from New York to Paris. Armed with only a few sandwiches, some bottles of water, paper maps, and a flashlight, Lindbergh successfully navigated over the Atlantic Ocean in thirty-three hours. Some historians have dubbed Lindbergh the “hero of the decade,” not only for his transatlantic journey, but because he helped to restore the faith of many Americans in



*Babe Ruth's incredible talent attracted widespread attention to the sport of baseball, helping it become America's favorite pastime. Ruth's propensity to shatter records with the swing of his bat made him a national hero during a period when defying conventions was the popular thing to do. "[Babe Ruth, full-length portrait, standing, facing slightly left, in baseball uniform, holding baseball bat]," c. 1920. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92507380/>.*

individual effort and technological advancement. Devastated in war by machine guns, submarines, and chemical weapons, Lindbergh’s flight demonstrated that technology could inspire and accomplish great things. *Outlook Magazine* called Lindbergh “the heir of all that we like to think is best in America.”

The decade’s popular culture seemed to revolve around escape. Coney Island in New York marked new amusements for young and old. Americans



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drove their sedans to massive theaters to enjoy major motion pictures. Radio towers broadcasted the bold new sound of jazz, the adventure of soap operas, and the feats of amazing athletes. Dempsey and Grange seemed bigger, stronger, and faster than any who dared to challenge them. Babe Ruth smashed home runs out of ball parks across the country. And Lindbergh escaped earth's gravity and crossed entire ocean. Neither Dempsey nor Ruth nor Lindbergh made Americans forget the horrors of the First World War and the chaos that followed, but they made it seem as if the future would be that much brighter.

### V. "The New Woman"

The rising emphasis on spending and accumulation nurtured a national ethos of materialism and individual pleasure. These impulses were embodied in the figure of the flapper, whose bobbed hair, short skirts, makeup, cigarettes, and carefree spirit captured the attention of American novelists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. Rejecting the old Victorian values of desexualized modesty and self-restraint, young "flappers" seized opportunities for the public coed pleasures offered by new commercial leisure institutions, such as dance halls, cabarets, and nickelodeons, not to mention the illicit blind tigers and speakeasies spawned by Prohibition. So doing, young American women had helped to usher in a new morality that permitted women greater independence, freedom of movement, and access to the delights of urban living. In the words of psychologist G. Stanley



*This "new breed" of women – known as the flapper – went against the gender proscriptions of the era, bobbing their hair, wearing short dresses, listening to jazz, and flouting social and sexual norms. While liberating in many ways, these behaviors also reinforced stereotypes of female carelessness and obsessive consumerism that would continue throughout the twentieth century. Bain News Service, "Louise Brooks," undated. [Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ggb2006007866/), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ggb2006007866/>.*

Hall, "She was out to see the world and, incidentally, be seen of it."

Such sentiments were repeated in an oft-cited advertisement in a 1930 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*: "Today's woman gets what she wants. The vote. Slim sheaths of silk to replace voluminous petticoats. Glassware in sapphire blue or glowing

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amber. The right to a career. Soap to match her bathroom's color scheme." As with so much else in 1920s, however, sex and gender were in many ways a study in contradictions. It was the decade of the "New Woman," and one in which only 10% of married women worked outside the home. It was a decade in which new technologies decreased time requirements for household chores, and one in which standards of cleanliness and order in the home rose to often impossible standards. It was a decade in which women would, finally, have the opportunity to fully exercise their right to vote, and one in which the often thinly-bound women's coalitions that had won that victory splintered into various causes. Finally, it was a decade in which images such as the "flapper" would give women new modes of representing femininity, and one in which such representations were often inaccessible to women of certain races, ages, and socio-economic classes.

Women undoubtedly gained much in the 1920s. There was a profound and keenly felt cultural shift which, for many women, meant increased opportunity to work outside the home. The number of professional women, for example, significantly rose in the decade. But limits still existed, even for professional women. Occupations such as law and medicine remained overwhelmingly "male": the majority of women professionals were in "feminized" professions such as teaching and nursing. And even within these fields, it was difficult for women to rise to leadership positions.



*The frivolity, decadence, and obliviousness of the 1920s was embodied in the image of the flapper; the stereotyped carefree and indulgent woman of the Roaring Twenties depicted by Russell Patterson's drawing. Russell Patterson, artist, "Where there's smoke there's fire," c. 1920s. [Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009616115/), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009616115/>.*

Further, it is crucial not to over-generalize the experience of all women based on the experiences of a much-commented upon subset of the population. A woman's race, class, ethnicity, and marital status all had an impact on both the likelihood that she worked outside the home, as well as the types of opportunities that were available to her. While there were exceptions, for many minority women, work outside the home was not a cultural statement but rather a financial necessity (or both), and physically demanding, low-paying domestic service work continued to be the most common job type. Young, working class white women were joining the workforce more frequently, too, but often in order to help support their struggling mothers and fathers.

For young, middle-class, white women—those most likely to fit the image of the carefree flapper—the most common workplace was the office. These

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predominantly single women increasingly became clerks, jobs that had been primarily “male” earlier in the century. But here, too, there was a clear ceiling. While entry-level clerk jobs became increasingly feminized, jobs at a higher, more lucrative level remained dominated by men. Further, rather than changing the culture of the workplace, the entrance of women into the lower-level jobs primarily changed the coding of the jobs themselves. Such positions simply became “women’s work.”

Finally, as these same women grew older and married, social changes became even subtler. Married women were, for the most part, expected to remain in the domestic sphere. And while new patterns of consumption gave them more power and, arguably, more autonomy, new household technologies and philosophies of marriage and child-rearing increased expectations, further tying these women to the home—a paradox that becomes clear in advertisements such as the one in the *Chicago Tribune*. Of course, the number of women in the workplace cannot exclusively measure changes in sex and gender norms. Attitudes towards sex, for example, continued to change in the 1920s, as well, a process that had begun decades before. This, too, had significantly different impacts on different social groups. But for many women—particularly young, college-educated white women—an attempt to rebel against what they saw as a repressive “Victorian” notion of sexuality led to an increase in premarital sexual activity strong enough that it became, in

the words of one historian, “almost a matter of conformity.”

In the homosexual community, meanwhile, a vibrant gay culture grew, especially in urban centers such as New York. While gay males had to contend with increased policing of the gay lifestyle (especially later in the decade), in general they lived more openly in New York in the 1920s than they would be able to for many decades following World War II. At the same time, for many lesbians in the decade, the increased sexualization of women brought new scrutiny to same-sex female relationships previously dismissed as harmless.

Ultimately, the most enduring symbol of the changing notions of gender in the 1920s remains the flapper. And indeed, that image was a “new” available representation of womanhood in the 1920s. But it is just that: *a* representation of womanhood of the 1920s. There were many women in the decade of differing races, classes, ethnicities, and experiences, just as there were many men with different experiences. For some women, the 1920s were a time of reorganization, new representations and new opportunities. For others, it was a decade of confusion, contradiction, new pressures and struggles new and old.

## VI. “The New Negro”

Just as cultural limits loosened across the nation, the 1920s represented a period of serious self-reflection

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among African Americans, most especially those in northern ghettos. New York City was a popular destination of American blacks during the Great Migration. The city's black population grew 257%, from 91,709 in 1910 to 327,706 by 1930 (the white population grew only 20%). Moreover, by 1930, some 98,620 foreign-born blacks had migrated to the U.S. Nearly half made their home in Manhattan's Harlem district.

Harlem originally lay between Fifth Avenue to Eighth Avenue and 130<sup>th</sup> Street to 145<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1930, the district had expanded to 155<sup>th</sup> Street and was home to 164,000 mostly African Americans. Continuous relocation to “the greatest Negro City in the world” exacerbated problems with crime, health, housing, and unemployment. Nevertheless, it importantly brought together a mass of black people energized by the population's World War I military service, the urban environment, and for many, ideas of Pan-Africanism or Garveyism. Out of the area's cultural ferment emerged the Harlem Renaissance, or what was then termed “New Negro Movement.” While this stirring in self-consciousness and racial pride was not confined to Harlem, this district was truly as James Weldon Johnson described: “The Culture Capital.” The Harlem Renaissance became a key component in African Americans' long history of cultural and intellectual achievements.

Alain Locke did not coin “New Negro”, but he did much to popularize it. In the 1925 *The New*

*Negro*, Locke proclaimed that the generation of subservience was no more—“we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation.” Bringing together writings by men and women, young and old, black and white, Locke produced an anthology that was *of* African Americans, rather than only *about* them. The book joined many others. Popular Harlem Renaissance writers published some twenty-six novels, ten volumes of poetry, and countless short stories between 1922 and 1935. Alongside the well-known Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, women writers like Jessie Redmon Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston published nearly one-third of these novels. While themes varied, the literature frequently explored and countered pervading stereotypes and forms of American racial prejudice.

The Harlem Renaissance was manifested in theatre, art, and music. For the first time, Broadway presented black actors in serious roles. The 1924 production, *Dixie to Broadway*, was the first all-black show with mainstream showings. In art, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Aaron Douglas, and Palmer Hayden showcased black cultural heritage as well as captured the population's current experience. In music, jazz rocketed in popularity. Eager to hear “real jazz,” whites journeyed to Harlem's *Cotton Club* and *Smalls*. Next to Greenwich Village, Harlem's nightclubs and speakeasies (venues where alcohol was publicly consumed) presented a place where sexual freedom and gay life thrived. Unfortunately,

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while headliners like Duke Ellington were hired to entertain at Harlem's venues, the surrounding black community was usually excluded. Furthermore, black performers were often restricted from restroom use and relegated to service door entry. As the Renaissance faded to a close, several Harlem Renaissance artists went on to produce important works indicating that this movement was but one component in African American's long history of cultural and intellectual achievements.

The explosion of African American self-expression found multiple outlets in politics. In the 1910s and 20s, perhaps no one so attracted disaffected black activists as Marcus Garvey. Garvey was a Jamaican publisher and labor organizer who arrived in New York City in 1916. Within just a few years of his arrival, he built the largest black nationalist organization in the world, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Inspired by Pan-Africanism and Booker T. Washington's model of industrial education, and critical of what he saw as DuBois's elitist strategies in service of black elites, Garvey sought to promote racial pride, encourage black economic independence, and root out racial oppression in Africa and the Diaspora.

Headquartered in Harlem, the UNIA published a newspaper, *Negro World*, and organized elaborate parades in which members, "Garveyites," dressed in ornate, militaristic regalia and marched down city streets. The organization criticized the slow pace of



Marcus Garvey inspired black American activists disappointed with the lack of progress since emancipation to create a world-wide community to fight injustice. One of the many forms of social activism in the 1920s, Garveyism was seen by some as too radical to engender any real change. Yet Garveyism formed a substantial following, and was a major stimulus for later black nationalistic movements like the Black Panthers. Photograph of Marcus Garvey, August 5, 1924. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003653533/>.

the judicial focus of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as well as this organization's acceptance of memberships and funds from whites. "For the Negro to depend on the ballot and his industrial progress alone," Garvey opined, "will be hopeless as it does not help



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him when he is lynched, burned, jim-crowed, and segregated.” In 1919, the UNIA announced plans to develop a shipping company called the Black Star Line as part of a plan that pushed for blacks to reject the political system and to “return to Africa” instead.” Most of the investments came in the form of shares purchased by UNIA members, many of whom heard Garvey give rousing speeches across the country about the importance of establishing commercial ventures between African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Africans.

Garvey’s detractors disparaged these public displays and poorly managed business ventures, and they criticized Garvey for peddling empty gestures in place of measures that addressed the material concerns of African Americans. NAACP leaders depicted Garvey’s plan as one that simply said, “Give up! Surrender! The struggle is useless.” Enflamed by his aggressive attacks on other black activists and his radical ideas of racial independence, many African American and Afro-Caribbean leaders worked with government officials and launched the “Garvey Must Go” campaign, which culminated in his 1922 indictment and 1925 imprisonment and subsequent deportation for “using the mails for fraudulent purposes.” The UNIA never recovered its popularity or financial support, even after Garvey’s pardon in 1927, but his movement made a lasting impact on black consciousness in the United States and abroad. He inspired the likes of Malcolm X, whose parents were Garveyites, and Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Garvey’s message,

perhaps best captured by his rallying cry, “Up, you mighty race,” resonated with African Americans who found in Garveyism a dignity not granted them in their everyday lives. In that sense, it was all too typical of the Harlem Renaissance.

## VII. Culture War

For all of its cultural ferment, however, the 1920s were also a difficult time for radicals and immigrants and anything “modern.” Fear of foreign radicals led to the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists, in 1927. In May 1920, the two had been arrested for robbery and murder connected with an incident at a Massachusetts factory. Their guilty verdicts were appealed for years as the evidence surrounding their convictions was slim. For instance, while one eyewitness claimed that Vanzetti drove the get-away car, but accounts of others described a different person altogether. Nevertheless, despite around world lobbying by radicals and a respectable movement among middle class Italian organizations in the U.S., the two men were executed on August 23, 1927. Vanzetti conceivably provided the most succinct reason for his death, saying, “This is what I say . . . I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian.”

Many Americans expressed anxieties about the changes that had remade the United States and, seeking scapegoats, many middle-class white

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Americans pointed to Eastern European and Latin American immigrants (Asian immigration had already been almost completely prohibited), or African Americans who now pushed harder for civil rights and after migrating out of the American South to northern cities as a part of the Great Migration, that mass exodus which carried nearly half a million blacks out of the South between just 1910-1920. Protestants, meanwhile, continued to denounce the Roman Catholic Church and charged that American Catholics gave their allegiance to the Pope and not to their country.

In 1921, Congress passed the Emergency Immigration Act as a stopgap immigration measure, and then, three years later, permanently established country-of-origin quotas through the National Origins Act. The number of immigrants annually admitted to the United States from each nation was restricted to two percent of the population who had come from that country and resided in the United States in 1890. (By pushing back three decades, past the recent waves of “new” immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, the law made it extremely difficult for immigrants outside of Northern Europe to legally enter the United States.) The act also explicitly excluded all Asians, though, to satisfy southern and western growers, temporarily omitted restrictions on Mexican immigrants. The Sacco and Vanzetti trial and sweeping immigration restrictions pointed to a rampant nativism. A great number of Americans worried about a burgeoning America that did not resemble the

one of times past. Many wrote of an American riven by a cultural war.

## VIII. Fundamentalist Christianity

In addition to alarms over immigration and the growing presence of Catholicism and Judaism, a new core of Christian fundamentalists were very much concerned about relaxed sexual mores and increased social freedoms, especially as found in city centers. Although never a centralized group, most fundamentalists lashed out against what they saw as a sagging public morality, a world in which Protestantism seemed challenged by Catholicism, women exercised ever greater sexual freedoms, public amusements encouraged selfish and empty pleasures, and critics mocked prohibition through bootlegging and speak-easies.

Christian Fundamentalism arose most directly from a doctrinal dispute among Protestant leaders. Liberal theologians sought to intertwine religion with science and secular culture. These “Modernists,” influenced by the Biblical scholarship of nineteenth century German academics, argued that Christian doctrines about the miraculous might be best understood metaphorically. The church, they said, needed to adapt itself to the world. According to the Baptist pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick, the “coming of Christ” might occur “slowly...but surely, [as] His will and principles [are] worked out by God’s grace

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in human life and institutions.” The social gospel, which encouraged Christians to build the Kingdom of God on earth by working against social and economic inequality, was very much tied to liberal theology.

During the 1910s, funding from oil barons Lyman and Milton Stewart enabled the evangelist A. C. Dixon to commission some ninety essays to combat religious liberalism. The collection, known as *The Fundamentals*, became the foundational documents of Christian fundamentalism, from which the movement’s name is drawn. Contributors agreed that Christian faith rested upon literal truths, that Jesus, for instance, would physically return to earth at the end of time to redeem the righteous and damn the wicked. Some of the essays put forth that human endeavor would not build the Kingdom of God, while others covered such subjects as the virgin birth and biblical inerrancy. American Fundamentalists spanned Protestant denominations and borrowed from diverse philosophies and theologies, most notably the holiness movement, the larger revivalism of the nineteenth century and new dispensationalist theology (in which history proceeded, and would end, through “dispensations” by God). They did, however, all agree that modernism was the enemy and the Bible was the inerrant word of God. It was a fluid movement often without clear boundaries, but it featured many prominent clergymen, including the well-established and extremely vocal John Roach Straton (New York), J. Frank Norris (Texas), and William Bell Riley (Minnesota).

On March 21, 1925 in a tiny courtroom in Dayton, Tennessee, Fundamentalists gathered to tackle the issues of creation and evolution. A young biology teacher, John T. Scopes, was being tried for teaching his students evolutionary theory in violation of the Butler Act, a state law preventing evolutionary theory or any theory that denied “the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible” from being taught in publically-funded Tennessee classrooms. Seeing the act as a threat to personal liberty, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) immediately sought a volunteer for a “test” case, hoping that the conviction and subsequent appeals would lead to a day in the Supreme Court, testing the constitutionality of the law. It was then that Scopes, a part-time teacher and coach, stepped up and voluntarily admitted to teaching evolution (Scopes’ violation of the law was never in question). Thus the stage was set for the pivotal courtroom showdown—“the trial of the century”—between the champions and opponents of evolution that marked a key moment in an enduring American “culture war.”

The case became a public spectacle. Clarence Darrow, an agnostic attorney and a keen liberal mind from Chicago, volunteered to aid the defense came up against William Jennings Bryan. Bryan, the “Great Commoner,” was the three-time presidential candidate who in his younger days had led the political crusade against corporate greed. He had done so then with a firm belief in the righteousness of his cause, and now

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he defended biblical literalism in similar terms. The theory of evolution, Bryan said, with its emphasis on the survival of the fittest, “would eliminate love and carry man back to a struggle of tooth and claw.”

Newspapermen and spectators flooded the small town of Dayton. Across the nation, Americans tuned their radios to the national broadcasts of a trial that dealt with questions of religious liberty, academic freedom, parental rights, and the moral responsibility of education. For six days in July, the men and women of America were captivated as Bryan presented his argument on the morally corrupting influence of evolutionary theory (and pointed out that Darrow made a similar argument about the corruptive potential of education during his defense of the famed killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb a year before). Darrow eloquently fought for academic freedom.

At the request of the defense, Bryan took the stand as an “expert witness” on the Bible. At his age, he was no match for Darrow’s famous skills as a trial lawyer and his answers came across as blundering and incoherent, particularly as he was not in fact a literal believer in *all* of the Genesis account (believing—as many anti-evolutionists did—that the meaning of the word “day” in the book of Genesis could be taken as allegory) and only hesitantly admitted as much, not wishing to alienate his fundamentalist followers. Additionally, Darrow posed a series of unanswerable questions: Was the “great fish” that swallowed the



*The Scopes trial signified a pivotal moment when science and religion became diametrically opposed. The Scopes defense team, three of whom are seen in this photograph, argued a literal interpretation of the Bible that is still popular in many fundamentalist Christian circles today. “Dudley Field Malone, Dr. John R. Neal, and Clarence Darrow in Chicago, Illinois.” The Clarence Darrow Digital Collection, <http://darrow.law.umn.edu/photo.php?pid=874>.*

prophet Jonah created for that specific purpose? What precisely happened astronomically when God made the sun stand still? Bryan, of course, could cite only his faith in miracles. Tied into logical contradictions, Bryan’s testimony was a public relations disaster, although his statements were expunged from the record the next day and no further experts were allowed—Scopes’ guilt being established, the jury delivered a guilty verdict in minutes. The case was later thrown out on technicality. But few cared about the verdict. Darrow had, in many ways, at least to his defenders, already won: the fundamentalists seemed to have taken a beating in the national limelight. Journalist and satirist H. L. Mencken characterized the “circus in Tennessee” as an embarrassment for fundamentalism, and modernists remembered the “Monkey Trial” as a smashing victory. If fundamentalists retreated from

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the public sphere, they did not disappear entirely. Instead, they went local, built a vibrant subculture, and emerged many decades later stronger than ever.

### IX. Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK)

Suspensions of immigrants, Catholics, and modernists contributed to a string of reactionary organizations. None so captured the imaginations of the country as the reborn Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a white supremacist organization that expanded beyond its Reconstruction Era anti-black politics to now claim to protect American values and way of life from blacks, feminists (and other radicals), immigrants, Catholics, Jews, atheists, bootleggers, and a host of other imagined moral enemies.

Two events in 1915 are widely credited with inspiring the rebirth of the Klan: the lynching of Leo Frank and the release of *The Birth of the Nation*, a popular and groundbreaking film that valorized the Reconstruction Era Klan as a protector of feminine virtue and white racial purity. Taking advantage of this sudden surge of popularity, Colonel William Joseph Simmons organized what is often called the “second” Ku Klux Klan in Georgia in late 1915. This new Klan, modeled after other fraternal organizations with elaborate rituals and a hierarchy, remained largely confined to Georgia and Alabama until 1920, when Simmons began a professional recruiting effort that resulted in individual chapters being formed across the country and membership rising to an estimated five million.

Partly in response to the migration of Southern blacks to Northern cities during World War I, the KKK expanded above the Mason-Dixon. Membership soared in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and Portland, while Klan-endorsed mayoral candidates won in Indianapolis, Denver, and Atlanta. The Klan often recruited through fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons and through various Protestant churches. In many areas, local Klansmen would visit churches of which they approved and bestow a gift of money upon the presiding minister, often during services. The Klan also enticed people to join through large picnics, parades, rallies, and ceremonies. The Klan established a women’s auxiliary in 1923 headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Women of the Ku Klux Klan mirrored the KKK in practice and ideology and soon had chapters in all forty-eight states, often attracting women who were already part of the prohibition movement, the defense of which was a centerpiece of Klan activism.

Contrary to its perception of as a primarily Southern and lower-class phenomenon, the second Klan had a national reach composed largely of middle-class people. Sociologist Rory McVeigh surveyed the KKK newspaper *Imperial Night-Hawk* for the years 1923 and 1924, at the organization’s peak, and found the largest number of Klan-related activities to have occurred in Texas, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Georgia. The Klan was even present in Canada, where it was a powerful force within Saskatchewan’s Conservative Party. In many states and localities,



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the Klan dominated politics to such a level that one could not be elected without the support of the KKK. For example, in 1924, the Klan supported William Lee Cazort for governor of Arkansas, leading his opponent in the Democratic Party primary, Thomas Terral, to seek honorary membership through a Louisiana klavern so as not to be tagged as the anti-Klan candidate. In 1922, Texans elected Earle B. Mayfield, an avowed Klansman who ran openly as that year's "kandidate," to the United States Senate. At its peak the Klan claimed between four and five million members.

Despite the breadth of its political activism, the Klan is today remembered largely as a violent vigilante group—and not without reason. Members of the Klan and affiliated organizations often carried out acts of lynching and “nightriding”—the physical harassment of bootleggers, union activists, civil rights workers, or any others deemed “immoral” (such as suspected adulterers) under the cover of darkness or while wearing their hoods and robes. In fact, Klan violence was extensive enough in Oklahoma that Governor John C. Walton placed the entire state under martial law in 1923. Witnesses testifying before the military court disclosed accounts of Klan violence ranging from the flogging of clandestine brewers to the disfiguring of a prominent black Tulsan for registering African Americans to vote. In Houston, Texas, the Klan maintained an extensive system of surveillance that included tapping telephone lines and putting spies into the local post office in order to

root out “undesirables.” A mob that organized and led by Klan members in Aiken, South Carolina, lynched Bertha Lowman and her two brothers in 1926, but no one was ever prosecuted: the sheriff, deputies, city attorney, and state representative all belonged to the Klan.

The Klan dwindled in the face of scandal and diminished energy over the last years of the 1920s. By 1930, the Klan only had about 30,000 members and it was largely spent as a national force, only to appear again as a much diminished force during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s.

## X. Conclusion

In his inauguration speech in 1929, Herbert Hoover told Americans that the Republican Party had brought prosperity. Even ignoring stubbornly large rates of poverty and unparalleled levels of inequality, he could not see the weaknesses behind the decade's economy. Even as the new culture of consumption promoted new freedoms, it also promoted new insecurities. An economy built on credit exposed the nation to tremendous risk. Flailing European economies, high tariffs, wealth inequality, a construction bubble, and an ever-more flooded consumer market loomed dangerously until the Roaring Twenties would grind to a halt. In a moment the nation's glitz and glamour seemed to give way to decay and despair. For farmers, racial minorities, unionized workers, and other populations that did not share in 1920s prosperity, the veneer

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of a Jazz Age and a booming economy had always been a fiction. But for them, as for millions of Americans, end of an era was close. The Great Depression loomed.

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# UNIT 7

## TIMELINE

| 1920's Timeline: 1920-1929 |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1920                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prohibition</b> began.</li> <li>• Women could vote.</li> <li>• Republican, Warren G. Harding, became president.</li> <li>• <b>KDKA</b> became the first radio station to go on the air.</li> <li>• The census for the first time in American history showed that the US population was more urban than rural.</li> </ul>   |
| 1921                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress established immigration quotas.</li> <li>• <b>Sheppard-Towner Act (Maternity Act)</b> established the first health care program run on federal funding to increase access to health care for rural and poor women in an effort to reduce infant mortality (lapsed in 1929).</li> </ul>   |
| 1922                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Five Power Treaty</b> reduced the size of the Navy.</li> </ul>   |
| 1923                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Equal Rights Amendment</b> introduced to Congress for the first time.</li> </ul>   |
| 1924                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republican, Calvin Coolidge, became president after Warren Harding dies in office.</li> <li>• <b>Ku Klux Klan</b> reaches the height of its popularity.</li> <li>• <b>The Dawes Plan</b> was enacted to help faltering European economies.</li> <li>• <b>Indian Citizenship Act</b> passed.</li> <li>• <b>Calvin Coolidge</b> reelected president.</li> <li>• <b>Johnson-Reed Immigration Act</b> passed to tighten the 1921 immigration quotas.</li> </ul> |
| 1925                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dance, <b>the Charleston</b> was made famous by a New York City play.</li> <li>• The <b>Scopes Trial</b> (Monkey Trial) occurred.</li> </ul>  |
| 1926                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Broadcasting Company (NBC)</b> created the first national radio broadcast network.</li> </ul>   |
| 1927                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Charles Lindbergh</b> flew solo across the Atlantic to Paris in 33.5 hours.</li> <li>• Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti executed.</li> <li>• <b><u>The Jazz Singer</u></b> became the first, full-length movie with sound. The “talkie” era began.</li> </ul>  |
| 1928                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walt Disney introduces Mickey Mouse.</li> </ul>   |

# UNIT 7

## TIMELINE

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1929

- Republican, **Herbert Hoover**, elected president.
- St. Valentine's Day Massacre.
- **Agriculture Marketing Act** passed.
- Robert and Helen Lynd's community study, **Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture**, published.
- In October, the **New York Stock Exchange** falls (the crash) leading to the Great Depression.

# THE GREAT DEPRESSION ERA

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## The Great Depression in Theme Analysis

The New Deal was not radically liberal, but it was progressive. It solidified and matured trends in the government from before the Depression. Thus it did not solve the nation's problems, but rather, it maintained stability in the economy. However, with the Depression and New Deal, the political scale, which had “wobbled” between hands-off and hands-on government for so many years, CRASHED firmly down on the side of hands-on progressivism. The social programs and new perceptions of the role of the federal government in solving people's and society's problems did not leave the American mind set. As a result of the Depression, both political parties knew that what the public wanted was a hands-on government, and both also knew that in order to survive politically they had to become hands-on progressive in character. The Democrats simply were the more progressive of the two. \*The only major difference between the two parties was simply how much should the government do, not so much if the government should do it. What reinforced this view of the role of the government and what helped to solve the problems of the Depression was World War Two.

## Origins of the Depression

On the surface, it appeared that (with an increase in stock prices, shiny new cars, rapidly expanding suburbs, and other aspects of life in the 1920s) Herbert

Hoover's claim that a “final triumph over poverty” had occurred was true. However, hidden economic weaknesses were underneath the surface of 1920s prosperity. The growth of the decade depended on a few major industries: construction, automotive, and consumer good production. Other important sectors of the economy barely were making a profit, specifically the textile, railroad, steel and iron industries. Most importantly, the farm economy was suffering from serious losses. Eventually, even the boom industries of the era showed signs of weakness. Construction fell off and consumer goods markets were flooded due to overproduction. As a result, incomes started to fall. Hoover blamed the slowdown of the economy on over production, a poor distribution of income (70% of Americans lived below the poverty line, while 513 families made over a million dollars per year), and on high credit spending. Although people lived comfortably during the 1920s, they did so primarily by spending most if not all of their monthly income and buying the rest of their consumer wants on credit. These credit expenditures often included basic items such as food and housing. Credit spending, and the “buy now pay later” mentality dominated in all sectors of the economy including on the stock market.

## The Stock Market Plunge

The American appearance of financial prosperity generated a boom in the stock market with individuals buying stocks on credit. One could place a small amount of money down toward stock, sell it at a



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higher rate, and hopefully be able to not only pay off the credit, but also pocket some profits. As a result of this speculative fervor, stock prices rose artificially until the price of stock no longer represented the dividends earned or the economic worth of the company. The stock market crash on October 29, 1929 was the culmination of buying stock on credit and the other economic weaknesses of the 1920s. On this day, the “bottom fell out” of the stock market. Immediately no one wanted to buy but rather to sell stock. This resulted in a financial panic. J.P. Morgan and other financial giants pooled together \$50 million to buy stock. They managed to recover \$3 billion of the \$6 billion lost in the morning. Confidence in the market increased slightly and then declined again. The crash represented only the start of the economic decline during the 1930s’ Great Depression. Things only were going to go from bad to worse. Hundreds of brokers, speculators, and creditors were ruined. By mid-November, New York City hotel clerks jokingly asked if people wanted rooms for sleeping or jumping, though not as many people committed suicide as portrayed in popular culture.

## Hoover’s Depression

Philosophically, President Hoover tied his own hands in being able to solve the nation’s financial crisis. He believed that government could only help NOT solve peoples’ problems. Instead, as a hands-off conservative, he wanted to see the private sector (charities, businesses) work to counter the problems facing the

nation. Unfortunately, the private sector did not respond. And, Hoover allowed the federal government to take actions designed to cushion the economic fall and foster recovery. The government:

- Cut taxes
- Created federal jobs, putting people to work building roads
- Encouraged state and local governments to establish public works projects (e.g. some counties spent millions of dollars to employ the public).
- Established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which gave federal loans to railroad, insurance, and other large companies in order to fuel the economy via a trickle-down effect. Hoover hoped that if the larger industries were “saved,” they would be able to employ people again and get the economy moving.
- Implemented the Agricultural Marketing Act, which stabilized farm prices (they had fallen from \$12 billion to \$5 billion) by buying crop surpluses. By 1931, the program failed, farm prices faltered, and farmers went bankrupt.

Hoover’s policies were just not enough. They were the best that he could do based on his philosophical beliefs, and Hoover did more than any other president had done to control the economy, prior to the Depression.

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## Other Complications for Hoover

- **Farmers and the Dust Bowl:** An environmental disaster struck the farming states. Due to years of over tilling the land, sun and wind destroyed millions of acres of crops and topsoil. Clouds of dust overtook the landscape, often killing people. Many folks fled to other areas of the country, like California. Some of these people were nicknamed, “Oakies.”
- **Veterans and the Bonus Army:** Veterans of WW1 had been promised their bonuses from the war. When times got hard they wanted the government to pay, as they had earned the money for serving their country. Congress refused, and the vets protested by building an encampment around Washington D.C.. These men were dispersed by General Douglas MacArthur who told his soldiers to use sabers, rifles, bayonets, and tear gas. The make-quik homes of the Bonus Army were burnt down. Rumors of wounded vets and the death of a baby increased public outrage against Hoover’s administration.
- **Families and the Depression:** Families had to worry about the basics of survival, and a new class of poor emerged comprised of folks from the upper and middle classes. However, attitudes toward poverty still reflected the middle class value that poverty (even during

the Depression) was caused by weak moral values and laziness of the individual. This put a stigma on families obtaining relief. The Depression had a dramatic effect on the family structure. Fathers, as primary income earners, became depressed and often abandoned their wives and children. They wandered the country side as hobos. The hobo population increased dramatically during the Depression. Many families also became homeless while trying to counter, starvation, malnutrition, and deep debt. In families that stayed together, their struggles to survive often became community endeavors. Recycling and reusing clothing and household goods became commonplace again. Some people were not impacted by the Depression, and it was to these families that many neighbors in need turned.

- **Minorities:** Minorities and African-Americans particularly were left suffering, as any jobs or relief tended to go to whites first. During the Depression many African-American women turned to prostitution as the only means of providing for their children. As soon as these women were able, they stopped such employment.
- **Hoover Takes the Heat:** Because of all of these factors, the majority of the public hated Hoover. His 1928 election pledge of “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage” became “a chicken in every garage.” An empty

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pocket turned out due to a lack of money was known as a “Hoover Flag.” And, a newspaper (often used for insulation or for warmth) was called a “Hoover Blanket.” Yet, Hoover had done more to manage the economy than any president before him. Most likely, he would have been considered a decent president if it were not for the difficult times. Instead, he became a scapegoat for the nation’s problems. Ironically, it was Hoover’s ideas and programs that set the stage for Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal.

## The Election of 1932

Hoover’s campaign was a disaster. Everywhere he went he was harassed. FDR’s campaign was well organized, had a tone of hope, appealed to regional economic needs, criticized Hoover, had “Happy Days are Here Again” as a theme song, and had “Nothing to fear but fear itself” as a slogan. FDR won with 472 electoral votes over Hoover’s 59.

## Roosevelt the Man

FDR was born in 1882 to a wealthy New York family. He married his 5th cousin, Eleanor Roosevelt, and they had 5 children. He had a long time affair with Eleanor’s private secretary. His political experience included serving in the NY Senate, as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Wilson, as a several time Vice-Presidential candidate, as a progressive governor of New York, and as president for

four terms, dying early in his fourth. FDR had a calm and strong image. A true progressive, he surrounded himself with experts and combined the principles of progressive reforms with Hoover’s associative state philosophy. He saw the Depression as a domestic crisis, caused by the Republicans (despite it being an international depression). He appealed to the public via his “fireside chats,” acting like a friend, father, or big brother to the nation. He knew how to play the media and the public relations game, but in reality he was insensitive to many of the true hard luck stories of the American public. He tried to keep his New Deal plans flexible, and as a result they were scattered and ineffective. Thus, the New Deal was only a patchwork of plans done through improvisation and expedience in reacting to circumstances.

## FDR’s First New Deal Programs

- **The First 100 Days:** During the first days of his administration, FDR signed 15 pieces of relief, recovery, and reform legislation. The repeal of prohibition via the 21st Amendment also took place.
- **The Character of His Programs:** FDR wanted business and government to cooperate, so that the government would not have to take any radical actions. Yet, many people said that FDR’s programs were socialistic, because money and power went from private to public hands. This was not the case, since his programs did not redistribute money and

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power. In fact, his programs were inadequate relief and did not foster recovery. Because of this, many liberals wanted FDR to do more direct government relief. FDR did such in his Second New Deal, but ultimately the New Deals were a maturation of the progressive tendencies and practices already accepted in society. *Thus, under the New Deal a system emerged in which politics and economic power were distributed amongst the main functional groups in society. This is called liberalism (which should not to be confused with partisan labels) and it was a key characteristic of the 20th century United States.* This can be understood by examining what areas (functional groups) the First New Deal targeted for reform, such as:

- **Banking:** On March 5, 1933 FDR declared a Bank Holiday, and banks were closed. Federal money was given to banks to protect their deposits. Certified banks were allowed to open when the government declared them sound. Also, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was formed (1933) to insure banks. Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Banking Act (1933), which expanded credit through the Federal Reserve System in order to counter the domestic hoarding of money.
- **The Stock Market:** A bill required that companies inform buyers of stock of the economic condition of the company. The government

regulated the stock market to restore stock values via the Securities and Exchange Commission.

- **Farms:** FDR continued Hoover's ideas, but helped larger farmers instead of smaller ones. In 1933 the Agricultural Adjustment Act controlled crop output and prices by paying farmers to keep lands fallow.
- **Industry:** FDR wanted to help large businesses in order to stabilize the economy and increase wages.
- **Public Works:** FDR established the Public Works Administration put people to work in governmental jobs, spending \$3.3 billion to do it. The National Recovery Act created industrial work and boosted the industrial infrastructure.

## The Second New Deal

As the Depression continued, many attacked FDR's programs. Liberals were angry at FDR for not doing enough to directly aid people, while conservatives felt the New Deal was socialistic. FDR responded with an emphasis on encouraging local reforms, while trying new federal programs to help those suffering the most. Some such programs were:

- **Tennessee Valley Authority (1933):** TVA authorized the federal construction of dams and power plants in the economically depressed area of Appalachia in the Tennessee

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Valley. The program was successful in developing the area and set the precedent for a national rural electrification program, while putting people to work.

- **Unemployment Relief:** FDR created programs designed to assist in employing the nearly 12 million unemployed. These programs sent men to work on : buildings, roads , national parks, irrigation projects, ditch digging, tree planting, school building, and other projects. The programs also paid rural teachers, gave direct federal aid to states for relief, and gave money to artists and musicians to use their skills for the benefit of the nation. The jobs created by these programs paid around \$30-50 per week, which was less than standard pay in a given field but more than direct relief. Between 1935 and 1938, 2.1 million people were employed per year through these work relief programs. However, most of the programs ended after a few years. The Works Progress Administration and Social Security Administration were the most famous of these Second New Deal work relief programs.
- **National Labor Relations Act:** The government told companies that they must collective bargain and treat labor equally in negotiations.

ture and ability to calm the nation's fears that helped sustain people through the crisis. FDR's propaganda machine promoted a sense that the nation was doing better, but in reality only minor improvements had occurred. The New Deal took another blow when the Supreme Court ruled that some of the New Deal legislation was illegal. FDR tried to fight the court by maneuvering to raise the number of justices on it from 9 to 15, in order to add men who supported his agenda. This act created the "court packing" scandal, and Congress defeated the bill asking for more judges. By 1938 the New Deal was all but dead.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

## The Decline of the New Deal

The New Deal itself only helped a little. Instead it was FDR, the man, whose promise of hope for the fu-



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*"Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California," [Library of Congress](#).*

### I. Introduction

The wonder of the stock market had permeated popular culture throughout the 1920s. Although it was released during the first year of the Great Depression, the 1930 film *High Society Blues* captured the speculative hope and prosperity of the previous decade. "I'm in the Market for You," a popular musical number from the film, even used the stock market as a metaphor for love: *You're going up, up, up in my estimation, / I want a thousand shares of your caresses, too. / We'll count the hugs and kisses, / When dividends are due, / Cause I'm in the market for you.* But, just as the song was being recorded in 1929, the stock market reached the apex of its swift climb,

crashed, and brought an abrupt end to the seeming prosperity of the "Roaring '20s." The Great Depression had arrived.

### II. The Origins of the Great Depression

On Thursday, October 24, 1929, stock market prices suddenly plummeted. Ten billion dollars in investments (roughly equivalent to about \$100 billion today) disappeared in a matter of hours. Panicked selling set in, stock sunk to record lows, and stunned investors crowded the New York Stock Exchange demanding answers. Leading bankers met privately at the offices of J.P. Morgan and raised millions in per-

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sonal and institutional contributions to halt the slide. They marched across the street and ceremoniously bought stocks at inflated prices. The market temporarily stabilized but fears spread over the weekend and the following week frightened investors dumped their portfolios to avoid further losses. On October 29, “Black Tuesday,” the stock market began its long precipitous fall. Stock values evaporated. Shares of U.S. Steel dropped from \$262 to \$22. General Motors’ stock fell from \$73 a share to \$8. Four-fifths of the J.D. Rockefeller’s fortune—the greatest in American history—vanished.

Although the Crash stunned the nation, it exposed the deeper, underlying problems with the American economy in the 1920s. The stock market’s popularity grew throughout the decade, but only 2.5% of Americans had brokerage accounts; the overwhelming majority of Americans had no direct personal stake in Wall Street. The stock market’s collapse, no matter how dramatic, did not by itself depress the American economy. Instead, the Crash exposed a great number of factors which, when combined with the financial panic, sunk the American economy into the greatest of all economic crises. Rising inequality, declining demand, rural collapse, overextended investors, and the bursting of speculative bubbles all conspired to plunge the nation into the Great Depression.

Despite resistance by Progressives, the vast gap between rich and poor accelerated throughout the early-twentieth century. In the aggregate, Americans



“Crowd of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash of 1929,” 1929. *Library of Congress*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99471695/>.

were better off in 1929 than in 1920. Per capita income had risen 10% for all Americans, but 75% for the nation’s wealthiest citizens. The return of conservative politics in the 1920s reinforced federal fiscal policies that exacerbated the divide: low corporate and personal taxes, easy credit, and depressed interest rates overwhelmingly favored wealthy investors who, flush with cash, spent their money on luxury goods and speculative investments in the rapidly rising stock market.

The pro-business policies of the 1920s were designed for an American economy built upon the production and consumption of durable goods. Yet, by the late 1920s, much of the market was saturated. The boom of automobile manufacturing, the great driver of the American economy in the 1920s, slowed as fewer and fewer Americans with the means to purchase a car

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had not already done so. More and more, the well-to-do had no need for the new automobiles, radios, and other consumer goods that fueled GDP growth in the 1920s. When products failed to sell, inventories piled up, manufacturers scaled back production, and companies fired workers, stripping potential consumers of cash, blunting demand for consumer goods, and replicating the downward economic cycle. The situation was only compounded by increased automation and rising efficiency in American factories. Despite impressive overall growth throughout the 1920s, unemployment hovered around 7% throughout the decade, suppressing purchasing power for a great swath of potential consumers.

For American farmers, meanwhile, “hard times” began long before the markets crashed. In 1920 and 1921, after several years of larger-than-average profits, farm prices in the South and West continued their long decline, plummeting as production climbed and domestic and international demand for cotton, foodstuffs, and other agricultural products stalled. Widespread soil exhaustion on western farms only compounded the problem. Farmers found themselves unable to make payments on loans taken out during the good years, and banks in agricultural areas tightened credit in response. By 1929, farm families were overextended, in no shape to make up for declining consumption, and in a precarious economic position even before the Depression wrecked the global economy.



*While a manufacturing innovation, Henry Ford's assembly line produced so many cars as to flood the automobile market in the 1920s. Interview with Henry Ford, *Literary Digest*, January 7, 1928. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ford\\_Motor\\_Company\\_assembly\\_line.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ford_Motor_Company_assembly_line.jpg).*

Despite serious foundational problems in the industrial and agricultural economy, most Americans in 1929 and 1930 still believed the economy would bounce back. In 1930, amid one of the Depression's many false hopes, President Herbert Hoover reassured an audience that “the depression is over.” But the president was not simply guilty of false optimism. Hoover made many mistakes. During his 1928 election campaign, Hoover promoted higher tariffs as a means for encouraging domestic consumption and protecting American farmers from foreign competition. Spurred by the ongoing agricultural depression, Hoover signed into law the highest tariff in American history, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930, just as global markets began to crumble. Other countries responded in kind, tariff walls rose across the globe, and international trade ground to a halt. Between 1929 and 1932, international trade dropped from \$36 billion to only \$12 billion. American exports fell by 78%. Combined with overproduction

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and declining domestic consumption, the tariff exacerbated the world's economic collapse.

But beyond structural flaws, speculative bubbles, and destructive protectionism, the final contributing element of the Great Depression was a quintessentially human one: panic. The frantic reaction to the market's fall aggravated the economy's other many failings. More economic policies backfired. The Federal Reserve over-corrected in their response to speculation by raising interest rates and tightening credit. Across the country, banks denied loans and called in debts. Their patrons, afraid that reactionary policies meant further financial trouble, rushed to withdraw money before institutions could close their doors, ensuring their fate. Such bank runs were not uncommon in the 1920s, but, in 1930, with the economy worsening and panic from the crash accelerating, 1,352 banks failed. In 1932, nearly 2,300 banks collapsed, taking personal deposits, savings, and credit with them.

The Great Depression was the confluence of many problems, most of which had begun during a time of unprecedented economic growth. Fiscal policies of the Republican "business presidents" undoubtedly widened the gap between rich and poor and fostered a "stand-off" over international trade, but such policies were widely popular and, for much of the decade, widely seen as a source of the decade's explosive growth. With fortunes to be won and standards of living to maintain, few Americans had the foresight

or wherewithal to repudiate an age of easy credit, rampant consumerism, and wild speculation. Instead, as the Depression worked its way across the United States, Americans hoped to weather the economic storm as best they could, waiting for some form of relief, any answer to the ever-mounting economic collapse that strangled so many Americans' lives.

## III. Herbert Hoover and the Politics of the Depression

As the Depression spread, public blame settled on President Herbert Hoover and the conservative politics of the Republican Party. But Hoover was as much victim as perpetrator, a man who had the misfortune of becoming a visible symbol for large invisible forces. In 1928 Hoover had no reason to believe that his presidency would be any different than that of his predecessor, Calvin Coolidge, whose time in office was marked by relative government inaction, seemingly rampant prosperity, and high approval ratings.

Coolidge had decided not to seek a second term in 1928. A man of few words, "Silent Cal" publicized this decision by handing a scrap of paper to a reporter that simply read: "I do not choose to run for president in 1928." The race therefore became a contest between the Democratic governor of New York, Al Smith, whose Catholic faith and immigrant background aroused nativist suspicions and whose connections to Tammany Hall and anti-Prohibition politics offended reformers, and the Republican



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candidate, Herbert Hoover, whose All-American, Midwestern, Protestant background and managerial prowess during the First World War endeared him to American voters.

Hoover epitomized the “self-made man.” Orphaned at age 9, he was raised by a strict Quaker uncle on the West Coast. He graduated from Stanford University in 1895 and worked as an engineer for several multinational mining companies. He became a household name during World War I when he oversaw voluntary rationing as the head of the U.S. Food Administration and, after the armistice, served as the Director General of the American Relief Association in Europe. Hoover’s reputation for humanitarian service and problem-solving translated into popular support, even as the public soured on Wilson’s Progressive activism. Hoover was one of the few politicians whose career benefited from wartime public service. After the war both the Democratic and Republican parties tried to draft him to run for president in 1920.

Hoover declined to run in 1920 and 1924. He served instead as Secretary of Commerce under both Harding and Coolidge, taking an active role in all aspects of government. In 1928, he seemed the natural successor to Coolidge. Politically, aside from the issue of Prohibition (he was a “dry,” Smith a “wet”), Hoover’s platform differed very little from Smith’s, leaving little to discuss during the campaign except personality and religion. Both benefited Hoover.



*“Unemployed men queued outside a depression soup kitchen opened in Chicago by Al Capone,” February 1931. Wikimeida.*

Smith’s background engendered opposition from otherwise solid Democratic states, especially in the South, where his Catholic, ethnic, urban, and anti-Prohibition background were anathema. His popularity among urban ethnic voters counted for little. Several southern states, in part owing to the work of itinerant evangelical politicking, voted Republican for the first time since Reconstruction. Hoover won in a landslide, taking nearly 60% of the popular vote.

Although Hoover is sometimes categorized as a “business president” in line with his Republican predecessors, he also embraced an inherent business progressivism, a system of voluntary action called “Associationalism” that assumed Americans could maintain a web of voluntary cooperative organizations dedicated to providing economic



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assistance and services to those in need. Businesses, the thinking went, would willingly limit harmful practice for the greater economic good. To Hoover, direct government aid would discourage a healthy work ethic while Associationalism would encourage the very self-control and self-initiative that fueled economic growth. But when the Depression exposed the incapacity of such strategies to produce an economic recovery, Hoover proved insufficiently flexible to recognize the limits of his ideology. And when the ideology failed, so too did his presidency.

Hoover entered office upon a wave of popular support, but by October 1929 the economic collapse had overwhelmed his presidency. Like all too many Americans, Hoover and his advisers assumed—or perhaps simply hoped—that the sharp financial and economic decline was a temporary downturn, another “bust” of the inevitable boom-bust cycles that stretched back through America’s commercial history. Many economists argued that periodic busts culled weak firms and paved the way for future growth. And so when suffering Americans looked to Hoover for help, Hoover could only answer with volunteerism. He *asked* business leaders to promise to maintain investments and employment and *encouraged* state and local charities to provide assistance to those in need. Hoover established the President’s Organization for Unemployment Relief, or POUR, to help organize the efforts of private agencies. While POUR urged charitable giving, charitable relief organizations were overwhelmed by the growing needs of the many

multiplying unemployed, underfed, and unhoused Americans. By mid-1932, for instance, a quarter of all of New York’s private charities closed: they had simply run out of money. In Atlanta, solvent relief charities could only provide \$1.30 per week to needy families. The size and scope of the Depression overpowered the radically insufficient capacity of private volunteer organizations to mediate the crisis.

By 1932, with the economy long-since stagnant and a reelection campaign looming, Hoover, hoping to stimulate American industry, created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to provide emergency loans to banks, building-and-loan societies, railroads, and other private industries. It was radical in its use of direct government aid and out of character for the normally *laissez-faire* Hoover, but it also bypassed needy Americans to bolster industrial and financial interests. New York Congressman Fiorello LaGuardia, who later served as mayor of New York City, captured public sentiment when he denounced the RFC as a “millionaire’s dole.”

## IV. The Bonus Army

Hoover’s reaction to a major public protest sealed his legacy. In the summer of 1932, Congress debated a bill authorizing immediate payment of long-promised cash bonuses to veterans of World War I, originally scheduled to be paid out in 1945. Given the economic hardships facing the country, the bonus came to symbolize government relief for the most deserving recip-

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ients, and from across the country more than 15,000 unemployed veterans and their families converged on Washington, D.C. They erected a tent city across the Potomac River in Anacostia Flats, a “Hooverville” in the spirit of the camps of homeless and unemployed Americans then appearing in American cities.

Concerned with what immediate payment would do to the federal budget, Hoover opposed the bill, which was eventually voted down by the Senate. While most of the “Bonus Army” left Washington in defeat, many stayed to press their case. Hoover called the remaining veterans “insurrectionists” and ordered them to leave. When thousands failed to heed the vacation order, General Douglas MacArthur, accompanied by local police, infantry, cavalry, tanks, and a machine gun squadron, stormed the tent city and routed the Bonus Army. National media covered the disaster as troops chased down men and women, tear-gassed children, and torched the shantytown.

Hoover’s insensitivity toward suffering Americans, his unwillingness to address widespread economic problems, and his repeated platitudes about returning prosperity condemned his presidency. Hoover of course was not responsible for the Depression, not personally. But neither he nor his advisers conceived of the enormity of the crisis, a crisis his conservative ideology could neither accommodate nor address. As a result, Americans found little relief from Washington. They were on their own.

## V. The Lived Experience of the Great Depression

In 1934 a woman from Humboldt County, California, wrote to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt seeking a job for her husband, a surveyor, who had been out of work for nearly two years. The pair had survived on the meager income she received from working at the county courthouse. “My salary could keep us going,” she explained, “but—I am to have a baby.” The family needed temporary help, and, she explained, “after that I can go back to work and we can work out our own salvation. But to have this baby come to a home full of worry and despair, with no money for the things it needs, is not fair. It needs and deserves a happy start in life.”

As the United States slid ever deeper into the Great Depression, such tragic scenes played out time and time again. Individuals, families, and communities faced the painful, frightening, and often bewildering collapse of the economic institutions upon which they depended. The more fortunate were spared worst effects, and a few even profited from it, but by the end of 1932, the crisis had become so deep and so widespread that most Americans had suffered directly. Markets crashed through no fault of their own. Workers were plunged into poverty because of impersonal forces for which they shared no responsibility. With no safety net, they were thrown into economic chaos.

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With rampant unemployment and declining wages, Americans slashed expenses. The fortunate could survive by simply deferring vacations and regular consumer purchases. Middle- and working-class Americans might rely upon disappearing credit at neighborhood stores, default on utility bills, or skip meals. Those that could borrowed from relatives or took in boarders in homes or “doubled up” in tenements. The most desperate, the chronically unemployed, encamped on public or marginal lands in “Hoovervilles,” spontaneous shantytowns that dotted America’s cities, depending upon breadlines and street-corner peddling. Poor women and young children entered the labor force, as they always had. The ideal of the “male breadwinner” was always a fiction for poor Americans, but the Depression decimated millions of new workers. The emotional and psychological shocks of unemployment and underemployment only added to the shocking material depravities of the Depression. Social workers and charity officials, for instance, often found the unemployed suffering from feelings of futility, anger, bitterness, confusion, and loss of pride. Such feelings affected the rural poor no less than the urban.

## VI. Migration and Immigration During the Great Depression

On the Great Plains, environmental catastrophe deepened America’s longstanding agricultural crisis and magnified the tragedy of the Depression. Beginning in 1932, severe droughts hit from Texas to the



*“Shacks, put up by the Bonus Army on the Anacostia flats, Washington, D.C., burning after the battle with the military. The Capitol in the background. 1932.”*  
*Wikimedia, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Evictbonusarmy.jpg>.*

Dakotas and lasted until at least 1936. The droughts compounded years of agricultural mismanagement. To grow their crops, Plains farmers had plowed up natural ground cover that had taken ages to form over the surface of the dry Plains states. Relatively wet decades had protected them, but, during the early 1930s, without rain, the exposed fertile topsoil turned to dust, and without sod or windbreaks such as trees, rolling winds churned the dust into massive storms that blotted out the sky, choked settlers and livestock, and rained dirt not only across the region but as far east as Washington, D.C., New England, and ships on the Atlantic Ocean. The “Dust Bowl,” as the region became known, exposed all-too-late the need for conservation. The region’s farmers, already hit by years of foreclosures and declining commodity prices, were decimated. For many in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas who were “baked out, blown out, and broke,” their only hope was to travel west to Califor-

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nia, whose rains still brought bountiful harvests and—potentially—jobs for farmworkers. It was an exodus. Oklahoma lost 440,000 people, or a full 18.4 percent of its 1930 population, to out-migration.

Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother* became one of the most enduring images of the “Dust Bowl” and the ensuing westward exodus. Lange, a photographer for the Farm Security Administration, captured the image at migrant farmworker camp in Nipomo, California, in 1936. In the photograph a young mother stares out with a worried, weary expression. She a migrant, having left her home in Oklahoma to follow the crops in the Golden State. She took part in what many in the mid-1930s were beginning to recognize as a vast migration of families out of the southwestern plains states. In the image she cradles an infant and supports two older children, who cling to her. Lange’s photo encapsulated the nation’s struggle. The subject of the photograph seemed used to hard work but down on her luck, and uncertain about what the future might hold.

The “Okies,” as such westward migrants were disparagingly called by their new neighbors, were the most visible group many who were on the move during the Depression, lured by news and rumors of jobs in far flung regions of the country. By 1932 sociologists were estimating that millions of men were on the roads and rails traveling the country. Economists sought to quantify the movement of families from the Plains. Popular magazines and



“Hooverville, Seattle.” 1932-1937. Washington State Archives. <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/B7A94A0DC95F7B3E0F1081FDB3A72C1E>

newspapers were filled with stories of homeless boys and the veterans-turned-migrants of the Bonus Army commandeering boxcars. Popular culture, such as William Wellman’s 1933 film, *Wild Boys of the Road*, and, most famously, John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939 and turned into a hit movie a year later, captured the Depression’s dislocated populations.

These years witnessed the first significant reversal in the flow of people between rural and urban areas. Thousands of city-dwellers fled the jobless cities and moved to the country looking for work. As relief efforts floundered, many state and local officials threw up barriers to migration, making it difficult for newcomers to receive relief or find work. Some state legislatures made it a crime to bring poor migrants into the state and allowed local officials to deport migrants to neighboring states. In the winter of 1935-



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1936, California, Florida, and Colorado established “border blockades” to block poor migrants from their states and reduce competition with local residents for jobs. A billboard outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, informed potential migrants that there were “NO JOBS in California” and warned them to “KEEP Out.”

Sympathy for migrants, however, accelerated late in the Depression with the publication of John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. The Joad family’s struggles drew attention to the plight of Depression-era migrants and, just a month after the nationwide release of the film version, Congress created the Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens. Starting in 1940, the Committee held widely publicized hearings. But it was too late. Within a year of its founding, defense industries were already gearing up in the wake of the outbreak of World War II, and the “problem” of migration suddenly became a *lack* of migrants needed to fill war industries. Such relief was nowhere to be found in the 1930s.

Americans meanwhile feared foreign workers willing to work for even lower wages. The *Saturday Evening Post* warned that foreign immigrants, who were “compelled to accept employment on any terms and conditions offered,” would exacerbate the economic crisis. On September 8, 1930, the Hoover administration issued a press release on the administration of immigration laws “under existing conditions of unemployment.” Hoover instructed consular officers to scrutinize carefully the visa



“This iconic photograph made real the suffering of millions during the Great Depression. Dorothea Lange, “Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California” or “Migrant Mother,” February/March 1936. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>.

applications of those “likely to become public charges” and suggested that this might include denying visas to most, if not all, alien laborers and artisans. The crisis itself had served to stifle foreign immigration, but such restrictive and exclusionary actions in the first years of the Depression intensified its effects. The number of European visas issued fell roughly 60 percent while deportations dramatically increased. Between 1930 and 1932, 54,000 people were deported. An additional 44,000 deportable aliens left “voluntarily.”



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Exclusionary measures hit Mexican immigrants particularly hard. The State Department made a concerted effort to reduce immigration from Mexico as early as 1929 and Hoover's executive actions arrived the following year. Officials in the Southwest led a coordinated effort to push out Mexican immigrants. In Los Angeles, the Citizens Committee on Coordination of Unemployment Relief began working closely with federal officials in early 1931 to conduct deportation raids while the Los Angeles County Department of Charities began a simultaneous drive to repatriate Mexicans and Mexican Americans on relief, negotiating a charity rate with the railroads to return Mexicans "voluntarily" to their mother country. According to the federal census, from 1930 to 1940 the Mexican-born population living in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas fell from 616,998 to 377,433. Franklin Roosevelt did not indulge anti-immigrant sentiment as willingly as Hoover had. Under the New Deal, the Immigration and Naturalization Service halted some of the Hoover Administration's most divisive practices, but, with jobs suddenly scarce, hostile attitudes intensified, and official policies less than welcoming, immigration plummeted and deportations rose. Over the course of the Depression, more people left the United States than entered it.

## VII. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the "First New Deal"

The early years of the Depression were catastrophic. The crisis, far from relenting, deepened each year.

Unemployment peaked at 25% in 1932. With no end in sight, and with private firms crippled and charities overwhelmed by the crisis, Americans looked to their government as the last barrier against starvation, hopelessness, and perpetual poverty.

Few presidential elections in modern American history have been more consequential than that of 1932. The United States was struggling through the third year of the Depression and exasperated voters overthrew Hoover in a landslide to elect the Democratic governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt came from a privileged background in New York's Hudson River Valley (his distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, became president while Franklin was at Harvard). Franklin Roosevelt embarked upon a slow but steady ascent through state and national politics. In 1913, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a position he held during the defense emergency of World War I. In the course of his rise, in the summer of 1921, Roosevelt suffered a sudden bout of lower-body pain and paralysis. He was diagnosed with polio. The disease left him a paraplegic, but, encouraged and assisted by his wife, Eleanor, Roosevelt sought therapeutic treatment and maintained sufficient political connections to reenter politics. In 1928, Roosevelt won election as governor of New York. He oversaw the rise of the Depression and drew from progressivism to address the economic crisis. During his gubernatorial tenure, Roosevelt introduced the first comprehensive unemployment relief program and helped to pioneer efforts to expand public

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utilities. He also relied on like-minded advisors. For example, Frances Perkins, then commissioner of the state's Labor Department, successfully advocated pioneering legislation which enhanced workplace safety and reduced the use of child labor in factories. Perkins later accompanied Roosevelt to Washington and serve as the nation's first female Secretary of Labor.

On July 1, 1932, Roosevelt, the newly-designated presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, delivered the first and one of the most famous on-site acceptance speeches in American presidential history. Building to a conclusion, he promised, "I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people." Newspaper editors seized upon the phrase "new deal," and it entered the American political lexicon as shorthand for Roosevelt's program to address the Great Depression. There were, however, few hints in his political campaign that suggested the size and scope of the "New Deal." Regardless, Roosevelt crushed Hoover. He won more counties than any previous candidate in American history. He spent the months between his election and inauguration traveling, planning, and assembling a team of advisors, the famous "Brain Trust" of academics and experts, to help him formulate a plan of attack. On March 4th, 1933, in his first Inaugural Address, Roosevelt famously declared, "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear

itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Roosevelt's reassuring words would have rung hollow if he had not taken swift action against the economic crisis. In his first days in office, Roosevelt and his advisers prepared, submitted, and secured Congressional enactment of numerous laws designed to arrest the worst of the Great Depression. His administration threw the federal government headlong into the fight against the Depression.

Roosevelt immediately looked to stabilize the collapsing banking system. He declared a national "bank holiday" closing American banks and set to work pushing the Emergency Banking Act swiftly through Congress. On March 12th, the night before select banks reopened under stricter federal guidelines, Roosevelt appeared on the radio in the first of his "Fireside Chats." The addresses, which the president continued delivering through four terms, were informal, even personal. Roosevelt used his airtime to explain New Deal legislation, to encourage confidence in government action, and to mobilize the American people's support. In the first "chat," Roosevelt described the new banking safeguards and asked the public to place their trust and their savings in banks. Americans responded and across the country, deposits outpaced withdrawals. The act was a major success. In June, Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Banking Act, which instituted federal deposit

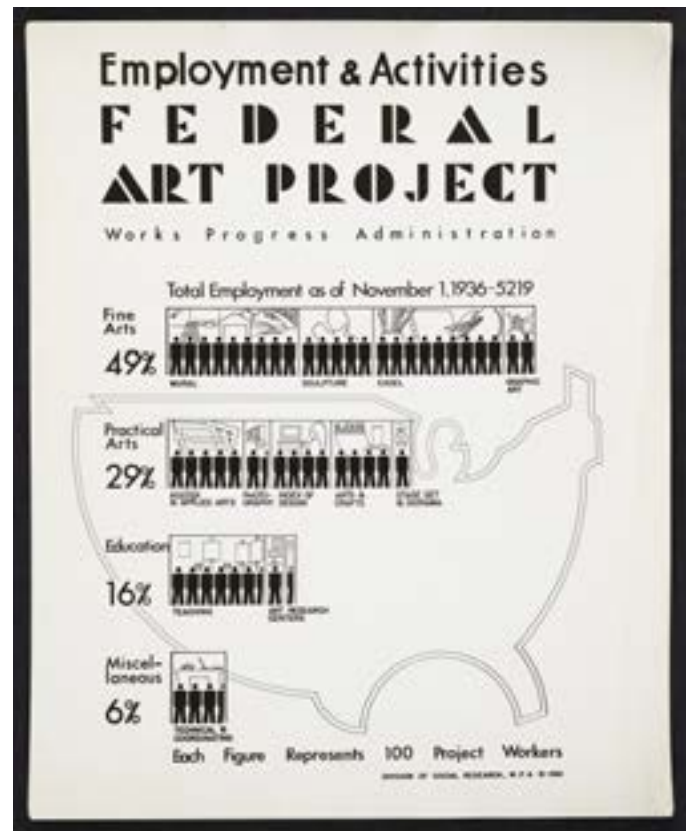
# THE AMERICAN YAWP

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insurance and barred the mixing of commercial and investment banking.

Stabilizing the banks was only a first step. In the remainder of his “First Hundred Days,” Roosevelt and his congressional allies focused especially on relief for suffering Americans. Congress debated, amended, and passed what Roosevelt proposed. As one historian noted, the president “directed the entire operation like a seasoned field general.” And despite some questions over the constitutionality of many of his actions, Americans and their congressional representatives conceded that the crisis demanded swift and immediate action. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed young men on conservation and reforestation projects; the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided direct cash assistance to state relief agencies struggling to care for the unemployed; the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) built a series of hydroelectric dams along the Tennessee River as part of a comprehensive program to economically develop a chronically depressed region; several agencies helped home and farm owners refinance their mortgages. And Roosevelt wasn’t done.

The heart of Roosevelt’s early recovery program consisted of two massive efforts to stabilize and coordinate the American economy: the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The AAA, created in May 1933, aimed to raise the prices of agricultural



Posters like this showing the extent of the Federal Art Project were used to prove the worth of the WPA’s various endeavors and, by extension, the value of the New Deal to the American people. “Employment and Activities poster for the WPA’s Federal Art Project,” January 1, 1936. [Wikimedia](#).

commodities (and hence farmers’ income) by offering cash incentives to voluntarily limit farm production (decreasing supply, thereby raising prices). The National Industrial Recovery Act, which created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) in June 1933, suspended antitrust laws to allow businesses to establish “codes” that would coordinate prices, regulate production levels, and establish conditions of employment to curtail “cutthroat competition.” In exchange for these exemptions, businesses agreed to provide reasonable wages and hours, end child labor, and allow workers the right to unionize. Participating

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businesses earned the right to display a placard with the NRA's "Blue Eagle," showing their cooperation in the effort to combat the Great Depression.

The programs of the First Hundred Days stabilized the American economy and ushered in a robust though imperfect recovery. GDP climbed once more, but even as output increased, unemployment remained stubbornly high. Though the unemployment rate dipped from its high in 1933, when Roosevelt was inaugurated, vast numbers remained out of work. If the economy could not put people back to work, the New Deal would try. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) and, later, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) put unemployed men and women to work on projects designed and proposed by local governments. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided grants-in-aid to local governments for large infrastructure projects, such as bridges, tunnels, schoolhouses, libraries, and America's first federal public housing projects. Together, they provided not only tangible projects of immense public good, but employment for millions. The New Deal was reshaping much of the nation.

## VIII. The New Deal in the South

The impact of initial New Deal legislation was readily apparent in the South, a region of perpetual poverty especially plagued by the Depression. In 1929 the average per capita income in the American Southeast was \$365, the lowest in the nation. Southern farmers averaged \$183 per year at a time when farmers on the

West Coast made more than four times that. Moreover, they were trapped into the production of cotton and corn, crops that depleted the soil and returned ever-diminishing profits. Despite the ceaseless efforts of civic boosters, what little industry the South had remained low-wage, low-skilled, and primarily extractive. Southern workers made significantly less than their national counterparts: 75% of non-southern textile workers, 60% of iron and steel workers, and a paltry 45% of lumber workers. At the time of the crash, southerners were already underpaid, underfed, and undereducated.

Major New Deal programs were designed with the South in mind. FDR hoped that by drastically decreasing the amount of land devoted to cotton, the AAA would arrest its long-plummeting price decline. Farmers plowed up existing crops and left fields fallow, and the market price did rise. But in an agricultural world of land-owners and landless farmworkers (such as tenants and sharecroppers), the benefits of the AAA bypassed the southerners who needed them most. The government relied on land owners and local organizations to distribute money fairly to those most affected by production limits, but many owners simply kicked tenants and croppers off their land, kept the subsidy checks for keeping those acres fallow, and reinvested the profits in mechanical farming equipment that further suppressed the demand for labor. Instead of making farming profitable again, the AAA pushed landless southern farmworkers off the land.

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But Roosevelt's assault on southern poverty took many forms. Southern industrial practices attracted much attention. The NRA encouraged higher wages and better conditions. It began to suppress the rampant use of child labor in southern mills, and, for the first time, provided federal protection for unionized workers all across the country. Those gains were eventually solidified in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a national minimum wage of \$0.25/hour (eventually rising to .40/hour). The minimum wage disproportionately affected low-paid southern workers, and brought southern wages within the reach of northern wages.

The president's support for unionization further impacted the South. Southern industrialists had proven themselves ardent foes of unionization, particularly in the infamous southern textile mills. In 1934, when workers at textile mills across the southern Piedmont struck over low wages and long hours, owners turned to local and state authorities to quash workers' groups, even as they recruited thousands of strikebreakers from the many displaced farmers swelling industrial centers looking for work. But in 1935 the National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, guaranteed the rights of most workers to unionize and bargain collectively. And so unionized workers, backed by the support of the federal government and determined to enforce the reforms of the New Deal, pushed for higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions. With growing success, union members came to see Roosevelt as a

protector of workers' rights. Or, as one union leader put it, an "agent of God."

Perhaps the most successful New Deal program in the South was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), an ambitious program to use hydroelectric power, agricultural and industrial reform, flood control, economic development, education, and healthcare, to radically remake the impoverished watershed region of the Tennessee River. Though the area of focus was limited, Roosevelt's TVA sought to "make a different type of citizen" out of the area's penniless residents. The TVA built a series of hydroelectric dams to control flooding and distribute electricity to the otherwise non-electrified areas at government-subsidized rates. Agents of the TVA met with residents and offered training and general education classes to improve agricultural practices and exploit new job opportunities. The TVA encapsulates Roosevelt's vision for uplifting the South and integrating it into the larger national economy.

Roosevelt initially courted conservative southern Democrats to ensure the legislative success of the New Deal, all but guaranteeing that the racial and economic inequalities of the region remained intact, but, by the end of his second term, he had won the support of enough non-southern voters that he felt confident in confronting some of the region's most glaring inequalities. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his endorsement of a report, formulated by a group of progressive southern New Dealers, entitled



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“A Report on Economic Conditions in the South.”

The pamphlet denounced the hardships wrought by the southern economy—in his introductory letter to the Report, called the region “the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem”—and blasted reactionary southern anti-New Dealers. He suggested that the New Deal could save the South and thereby spur a nationwide recovery. The Report was among the first broadsides in Roosevelt’s coming reelection campaign that addressed the inequalities that continued to mark southern and national life.

## IX. The New Deal in Appalachia

The New Deal also addressed another poverty-stricken region, Appalachia, the mountain-and-valley communities that roughly follow the Appalachian Mountain Range from southern New York to the foothills of Northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Appalachia’s abundant natural resources, including timber and coal, were in high demand during the country’s post-Civil War industrial expansion, but Appalachian industry simply extracted these resources for profit in far-off industries, depressing the coal-producing areas even earlier than the rest of the country. By the mid-1930s, with the Depression suppressing demand, many residents were stranded in small, isolated communities whose few employers stood on the verge of collapse. Relief workers from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) reported serious shortages of medical care, adequate shelter, clothing, and food. Rampant illnesses, including typhus, tuber-

culosis, pneumonia, and venereal disease, as well as childhood malnutrition, further crippled Appalachia.

Several New Deal programs targeted the region. Under the auspices of the NIRA, Roosevelt established the Division of Subsistence Homesteads (DSH) within the Department of the Interior to give impoverished families an opportunity to relocate “back to the land”: the DSH established 34 homestead communities nationwide, including the Appalachian regions of Alabama, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The CCC contributed to projects throughout Appalachia, including the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia, reforestation of the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia, and state parks such as Pine Mountain Resort State Park in Kentucky. The TVA’s efforts aided communities in Tennessee and North Carolina, and the Rural Electric Administration (REA) brought electricity to 288,000 rural households.

## X. Voices of Protest

Despite the unprecedented actions taken in his first year in office, Roosevelt’s initial relief programs could often be quite conservative. He had usually been careful to work within the bounds of presidential authority and congressional cooperation. And, unlike Europe, where several nations had turned towards state-run economies, and even fascism and socialism, Roosevelt’s New Deal demonstrated a clear reluctance to radically tinker with the nation’s foundational

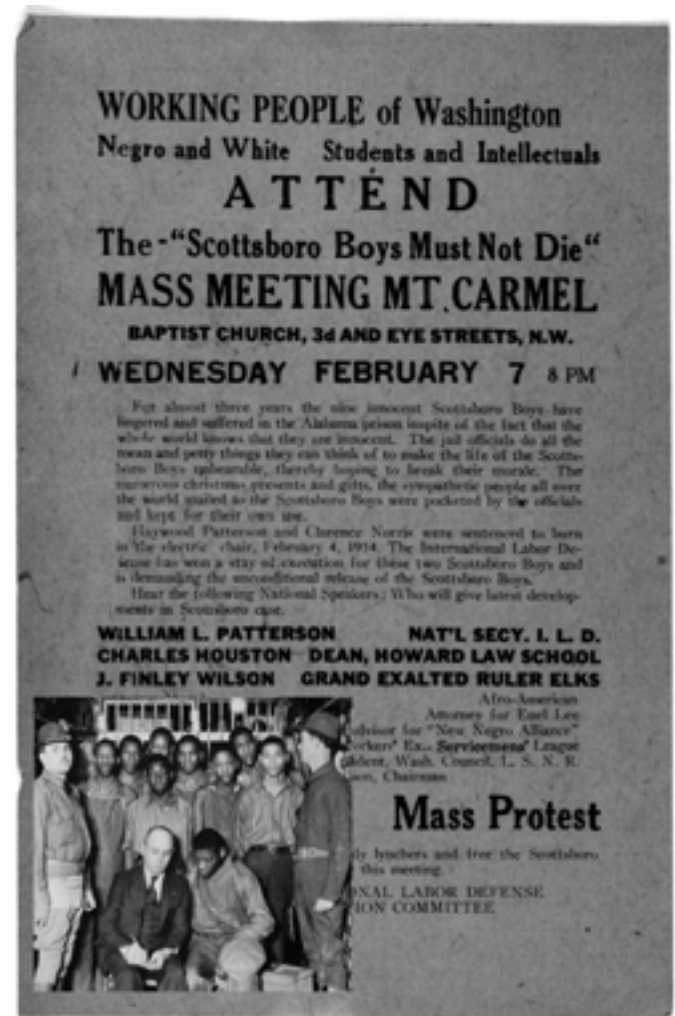
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economic and social structures. Many high-profile critics attacked Roosevelt for not going far enough, and, beginning in 1934, Roosevelt and his advisors were forced to respond.

Senator Huey Long, a flamboyant Democrat from Louisiana, was perhaps the most important “voice of protest.” Long’s populist rhetoric appealed those who saw deeply rooted but easily addressed injustice in the nation’s economic system. Long proposed a “Share Our Wealth” program in which the federal government would confiscate the assets of the extremely wealthy and redistribute them to the less well-off through guaranteed minimum incomes. “How many men ever went to a barbecue and would let one man take off the table what’s intended for nine-tenths of the people to eat?” he asked. Over 27,000 “Share the Wealth” clubs sprang up across the nation as Long traveled the country explaining his program to crowds of impoverished and unemployed Americans. Long envisioned the movement as a stepping stone to the presidency, but his crusade ended in late 1935 when he was assassinated on the floor of the Louisiana state capitol. Even in death, however, Long convinced Roosevelt to more stridently attack the Depression and American inequality.

But Huey Long was not alone in his critique of Roosevelt. Francis Townsend, a former doctor and public health official from California, promoted a plan for old age pensions which, he argued, would provide economic security for the elderly (who



*The accusation of rape brought against the so-called Scottsboro Boys, pictured with their attorney in 1932, generated controversy across the country. “The Scottsboro Boys, with attorney Samuel Leibowitz, under guard by the state militia, 1932.” Wikipedia.*

disproportionately suffered poverty) and encourage recovery by allowing older workers to retire from the work force. Reverend Charles Coughlin, meanwhile, a priest and radio personality from the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, gained a following by making vitriolic, anti-Semitic attacks on Roosevelt for cooperating with banks and financiers and proposing a new system of “social justice” through a more state-

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driven economy instead. Like Long, both Townsend and Coughlin built substantial public followings.

If many Americans urged Roosevelt to go further in addressing the economic crisis, the president faced even greater opposition from conservative politicians and business leaders. By late 1934, growing complaints from business-friendly Republicans of Roosevelt's willingness to regulate industry and use federal spending for public works and employment programs. In the South, Democrats who had originally supported the president grew increasingly hostile towards programs that challenged the region's political, economic, and social status quo. Yet the greatest opposition came from the Supreme Court, a conservative filled with appointments made from the long years of Republican presidents.

By early 1935 the Court was reviewing programs of the New Deal. On May 27, a day Roosevelt's supporters called "Black Monday," the justices struck down one of the president's signature reforms: in a case revolving around poultry processing, the Court unanimously declared the NRA unconstitutional. In early 1936, the AAA fell.

## XI. The Second New Deal (1935-1936)

Facing reelection and rising opposition from both the left and the right, Roosevelt decided to act. The New Deal adopted a more radical, aggressive approach to

poverty, the "Second" New Deal. In 1935, hoping to reconstitute some of the protections afforded workers in the now-defunct NRA, Roosevelt worked with Congress to pass the National Labor Relations Act (known as the Wagner Act for its chief sponsor, New York Senator Robert Wagner), offering federal legal protection, for the first time, for workers to organize unions. Three years later, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, creating the modern minimum wage. The Second New Deal also oversaw the restoration of a highly progressive federal income tax, mandated new reporting requirements for publicly traded companies, refinanced long-term home mortgages for struggling homeowners, and attempted rural reconstruction projects to bring farm incomes in line with urban ones.

The labor protections extended by Roosevelt's New Deal were revolutionary. In northern industrial cities, workers responded to worsening conditions by banding together and demanding support for worker's rights. In 1935, the head of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, took the lead in forming a new national workers' organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, breaking with the more conservative, craft-oriented AFL. The CIO won a major victory in 1937 when affiliated members in the United Auto Workers struck for recognition and better pay and hours at a General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. In the first instance of a "sit-down" strike, the workers remained in the building until management agreed to negotiate. GM recognized

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the UAW and the “sit-down” strike became a new weapon in the fight for workers’ rights. Across the country, unions and workers took advantage of the New Deal’s protections to organize and win major concessions from employers.

The signature piece of Roosevelt’s Second New Deal came the same year, in 1935. The Social Security Act provided for old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and economic aid, based on means, to assist both the elderly and dependent children. The president was careful to mitigate some of the criticism from what was, at the time, in the American context, a revolutionary concept. He specifically insisted that social security be financed from payroll, not the federal government; “No dole,” Roosevelt said repeatedly, “mustn’t have a dole.” He thereby helped separate Social Security from the stigma of being an undeserved “welfare” entitlement. While such a strategy saved the program from suspicions, Social Security became the centerpiece of the modern American social welfare state. It was the culmination of a long progressive push for government-sponsored social welfare, an answer to the calls of Roosevelt’s opponents on the Left for reform, a response to the intractable poverty among America’s neediest groups, and a recognition that the government would now assume some responsibility for the economic well-being of its citizens. But for all of its groundbreaking provisions, the Act, and the larger New Deal as well, excluded large swaths of the American population.

## XII. Equal Rights and the New Deal

The Great Depression was particularly tough for non-white Americans. As an African American pensioner told interviewer Studs Terkel, “The Negro was born in depression. It didn’t mean too much to him. The Great American Depression ... only became official when it hit the white man.” Black workers were generally the last hired when businesses expanded production and the first fired when businesses experienced downturns. In 1932, with the national unemployment average hovering around 25%, black unemployment reached as high as 50%, while even those black who kept their jobs saw their already low wages cut dramatically.

Blacks faced discrimination everywhere, but suffered especially severe legal inequality in the Jim Crow South. In 1931, for instance, a group of nine young men riding the rails between Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee, were pulled from the train near Scottsboro, Alabama, and charged with assaulting two white women. Despite clear evidence that the assault had not occurred, and despite one of the women later recanting, the young men endured a series of sham trials in which all but one were sentenced to death. Only the communist-oriented International Legal Defense came to the aid of the “Scottsboro Boys,” who soon became a national symbol of continuing racial prejudice in America and a rallying point for civil rights-minded Americans. In appeals, the ILD

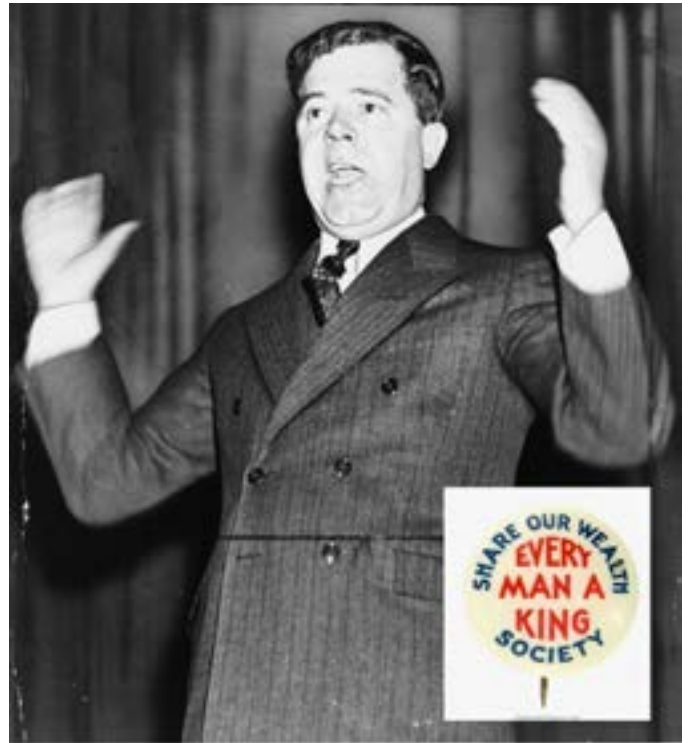
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successfully challenged the Boys' sentencing and the death sentences were either commuted or reversed, although the last of the accused did not receive parole until 1946.

Despite a concerted effort to appoint black advisors to some New Deal programs, Franklin Roosevelt did little to directly address the difficulties black communities faced. To do so openly would provoke southern Democrats and put his New Deal coalition at risk. Roosevelt not only rejected such proposals as abolishing the poll tax and declaring lynching a federal crime, he refused to specifically target African American needs in any of his larger relief and reform packages. As he explained to the national secretary of the NAACP, "I just can't take that risk."

In fact, even many of the programs of the New Deal had made hard times more difficult. When the codes of the NRA set new pay scales, they usually took into account regional differentiation and historical data. In the South, where African Americans had long suffered unequal pay, the new codes simply perpetuated that inequality. The codes also exempted those involved in farm work and domestic labor, the occupations of a majority of southern black men and women. The AAA was equally problematic as owners displaced black tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom were forced to return to their farms as low-paid day labor or to migrate to cities looking for wage work.



*Huey Long was a dynamic, indomitable force (with a wild speech-giving style, seen in the photograph) who campaigned tirelessly for the common man, demanding that Americans "Share Our Wealth." Photograph of Huey P. Long, c. 1933-35. [Wikimedia](#).*

Perhaps the most notorious failure of the New Deal to aid African Americans came with the passage of the Social Security Act. Southern politicians chaffed at the prospect of African Americans benefiting from federally-sponsored social welfare, afraid that economic security would allow black southerners to escape the cycle of poverty that kept them tied to the land as cheap, exploitable farm laborers. *The Jackson (Mississippi) Daily News* callously warned that "The average Mississippian can't imagine himself chipping in to pay pensions for able-bodied Negroes to sit around in idleness ... while cotton and corn crops are crying for workers." Roosevelt agreed



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to remove domestic workers and farm laborers from the provisions of the bill, excluding many African Americans, already laboring under the strictures of legal racial discrimination, from the benefits of an expanding economic safety net.

Women, too, failed to receive the full benefits of New Deal programs. On one hand, Roosevelt included women in key positions within his administration, including the first female Cabinet secretary, Frances Perkins, and a prominently placed African American advisor in the National Youth Administration, Mary McLeod Bethune. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a key advisor to the president and became a major voice for economic and racial justice. But many New Deal programs were built upon the assumption that men would serve as “bread-winners” and women as mothers, homemakers, and consumers. New Deal programs aimed to help both but usually by forcing such gendered assumptions, making it difficult for women to attain economic autonomy. New Deal social welfare programs tended to funnel women into means-tested, state administered relief programs while reserving “entitlement” benefits for male workers, creating a kind of two-tiered social welfare state. And so, despite great advances, the New Deal failed to challenge core inequalities that continued to mark life in the United States.

## XIII. The End of the New Deal (1937-1939)

By 1936 Roosevelt and his New Deal had won record popularity. In November Roosevelt annihilated his Republican challenger, Governor Alf Landon of Kansas, who lost in every state save Maine and Vermont. The Great Depression had certainly not ended, but it appeared to many to be beating a slow yet steady retreat, and Roosevelt, now safely re-elected, appeared ready to take advantage of both his popularity and the improving economic climate to press for even more dramatic changes. But conservative barriers continued to limit the power of his popular support. The Supreme Court, for instance, continued to gut many of his programs.

In 1937, concerned that the Court might overthrow Social Security in an upcoming case, Roosevelt called for legislation allowing him to expand the Court by appointing a new, younger justice for every sitting member over the age of 70. Roosevelt argued that the measure would speed up the Court’s ability to handle a growing back-log of cases; however, his “court-packing scheme,” as opponents termed it, was clearly designed to allow the president to appoint up to six friendly, pro-New Deal justices to drown the influence of old-time conservatives on the Court. Roosevelt’s “scheme” riled opposition and did not become law, but the

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chastened Court upheld Social Security and other pieces of New Deal legislation thereafter. Moreover, Roosevelt was slowly able to appoint more amenable justices as conservatives died or retired. Still, the “court-packing scheme” damaged the Roosevelt administration and opposition to the New Deal began to emerge and coalesce.

Compounding his problems, Roosevelt and his advisors made a costly economic misstep. Believing the United States had turned a corner, Roosevelt cut spending in 1937. The American economy plunged nearly to the depths of 1932–1933. Roosevelt reversed course and, adopting the approach popularized by the English economist John Maynard Keynes, hoped that countercyclical, “compensatory” spending would pull the country out of the recession, even at the expense of a growing budget deficit. It was perhaps too late. The “Roosevelt Recession” of 1937 became fodder for critics. Combined with the “court-packing scheme,” the recession allowed for significant gains by a “conservative coalition” of southern Democrats and Midwestern Republicans. By 1939, Roosevelt struggled to build congressional support for new reforms, let alone maintain existing agencies. Moreover, the growing threat of war in Europe stole the public’s attention and increasingly dominated Roosevelt’s interests. The New Deal slowly receded into the background, outshone by war.



*Unionization met with fierce opposition from owners and managers, particularly in the “Manufacturing Belt” of the Mid-West. Sheldon Dick, photographer, “Strikers guarding window entrance to Fisher body plant number three. Flint, Michigan,” January/February 1937. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/lsa2000021503/PP/>.*

### XIV. The Legacy of the New Deal

By the end of the 1930s, Roosevelt and his Democratic congresses had presided over a transformation of the American government and a realignment in American party politics. Before World War I, the American national state, though powerful, had been a “government out of sight.” After the New Deal, Americans came to see the federal government as a potential ally in their daily struggles, whether finding work, securing a decent wage, getting a fair price for agricultural products, or organizing a union. Voter turnout in presidential elections jumped in 1932 and again in 1936, with most of these newly-mobilized voters forming a durable piece of the Democratic Party that would

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remain loyal well into the 1960s. Even as affluence returned with the American intervention in World War II, memories of the Depression continued to shape the outlook of two generations of Americans. Survivors of the Great Depression, one man would recall in the late 1960s, “are still riding with the ghost—the ghost of those days when things came hard.”

Historians debate when the New Deal “ended.” Some identify the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 as the last major New Deal measure. Others see wartime measures such as price and rent control and the G.I. Bill (which afforded New Deal-style social benefits to veterans) as species of New Deal legislation. Still others conceive of a “New Deal order,” a constellation of “ideas, public policies, and political alliances,” which, though changing, guided American politics from Roosevelt’s Hundred Days forward to Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society—and perhaps even beyond. Indeed, the New Deal’s legacy still remains, and its battle lines still shape American politics.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# UNIT 8

## TIMELINE

| Great Depression Timeline: 1929-1939 |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1929                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stock Market crashed.</li> </ul>  |
| 1930                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pendulum swings in Congress toward the Democrats.</li> </ul>  |
| 1932                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Reconstruction Finance Corporation</b> created, making government credit accessible.</li> <li><b>Bonus Army</b> marched on Washington D.C.</li> <li>Democrat, <b>Franklin D. Roosevelt</b>, elected president.</li> </ul>  |
| 1933                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The “<b>hundred days</b>” legislation started the <b>First New Deal</b>.</li> <li>Estimated 13 million unemployed.</li> <li><b>National Recovery Act</b> established the <b>National Recovery Administration</b> (NRA), overseeing rights for workers, encouraging minimum wages and maximum weekly hours, and establishing fair market-competition practices and price setting. Declared unconstitutional by Supreme Court, but labor provisions re-emerged legislatively under the Wagner Act.*</li> <li><b>Agricultural Adjustment Act</b> passed, creating subsidies for farmers to not plant crops and to kill excess livestock.</li> <li><b>Banking Act</b> (Glass-Steagall Act) passed, establishing the <b>Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation</b> (FDIC).</li> <li><b>Twenty-First Amendment</b> (repealing the 18th on Prohibition).</li> <li><b>Federal Emergency Relief Administration</b> established.</li> <li><b>Tennessee Valley Authority</b> created to generate electricity in impoverished Appalachia.</li> </ul> |
| 1934                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Securities and Exchange Commission</b> created.</li> <li><b>National Housing Act</b> passed, creating the <b>Federal Housing Administration</b>.</li> <li><b>Indian Reorganization Act</b> passed, repealing the Dawes Severalty Act and establishing tribes as semi-sovereign nations.</li> </ul>   |

# TIMELINE

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|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1935 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Second New Deal</b> started.</li><li>• <b>Works Progress Administration</b> established.</li><li>• *<b>Wagner Act</b> passed, establishing the <b>National Labor Relations Board</b> and normalizing collective bargaining.</li><li>• <b>Committee for Industrial Organization</b> created.</li><li>• <b>Social Security Act</b> passed.</li><li>• Boulder Dam completed.</li><li>• <b>Dust Bowl</b></li></ul> |
| 1936 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roosevelt reelected.</li><li>• General Motors strike in Flint, Michigan.</li></ul>  |
| 1937 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GM recognized United Automobile Workers.</li><li>• FDR's "<b>Court-Packing</b>" controversy.</li><li>• The "<b>Roosevelt Recession</b>" started.</li></ul>  |
| 1938 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Fair Labor Standards</b> act passed, establishing the first federal minimum wage at \$0.25, ending most child labor, and establishing time and a half for overtime.</li><li>• The New Deal is considered over by most scholars.</li></ul>  |
| 1939 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• War broke out in Europe, and US declared neutrality.</li></ul>  |



# WORLD WAR II

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## WWII in Theme Analysis

After retreating into political-military isolationism after WWI, the United States once again heard of troubles in Europe. A global crisis emerged, due to the territorial aggressions of Adolph Hitler of Germany. The problems of the Depression still were lingering in the U.S., and Franklin D. Roosevelt faced domestic and international difficulties. The situation in Europe turned out to be the cure for the nation's economic problems. The U.S. industrial infrastructure enabled the U.S. to trade with the warring nations and to revitalize the economy by creating new markets for U.S. industrial-military goods. However, being “gun shy” as a result of WWI, many wanted to remain neutral toward the situation in Europe, even if it meant Germany took control over Britain and France. But in time, public opinion changed. Personally, FDR wanted the U.S. to play an active role in world affairs, and thus, he did not resist the war tide. He was an internationalist (not an isolationist) at heart, and he wanted the U.S. to become a leading global power. FDR got his wish. As a result of WWII, the progressive trends of the New Deal, increasing federal power, continued. And, as a result of the war, the U.S. emerged from its isolationist shell to fully embrace superpower status during what became known as the Cold War. As you read the text and do your research, just like with the WWI unit, you should find illustrative examples of the ways in which federal power grew as a result of WWII. Plus, you will want to look for the roots of the Cold War in WWII, e.g. at the Yalta & Potsdam conferences.

## Background to World War II

### Global Crisis & Preparation & Reaction to War:

- The war in Europe broke out due to the rise of Adolph Hitler's National Socialist Party (Nazi) and Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. Though other countries and European regions had been invaded prior, war ensued due to the British and French pledge to defend Poland. For a time, the Soviet Union and Germany, via the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-aggression Pact of 1939, agreed not to war and to divide Poland, eventually the Germans invaded the USSR, forcing it to side with the Allies.
- Initially, the US was neutral toward the war, though, with lessons from World War I learned, it was clear that maintaining neutrality would be difficult. In August of 1935, Congress had passed the Neutrality Act, which prohibited arms shipments to nations at war, and in 1937 it issued another that required nations buying non-war goods to pay cash and to transport these goods on their own vessels. Loans to belligerent nations also were banned. The 1939 Neutrality Act allowed any goods to be purchased via cash and carry. As the war continued, eventually Lend-Lease became policy in 1941, allowing the US to supply allies without trade-method restrictions.
- The US set up a 300 mile neutrality zone in

# WORLD WAR II

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the Western Hemisphere and patrolled it with the navy.

- As the situation in Europe worsened for the Allies with the Battle of the Atlantic, FDR decided to: prepare the US fleet for action, send part of the Pacific fleet to the Atlantic, and extend the neutrality zone to overlap with the German warzone in the Atlantic.
- FDR also was aware of Japanese aggressions in the Pacific and thus increased Pacific defenses, restricted the sale of aviation fuel and scrap iron to the Japanese, and put economic pressures on them.
- After the Japanese invaded French Indochina, the US opened talks, but the Japanese Minister of war, Hideki Tojo, determined that the US end offensive policies in the region, e.g. to China, or an attack on the US would come. Surveillance indicated that the deadline for an attack was December of 1941.
- December 7, 1941 or the “Day of Infamy” at 7:49 AM Hawaii Time, Japan attacked, damaging or sinking seven US battleships, eleven other ships, two-hundred aircraft, and killing 2,500 Americans. A number of aircraft carriers were out at sea on maneuvers, thus were spared. The Japanese also struck: Singapore, Guam, Philippines, and Hong Kong. Thus, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, the US declared war on Japan, and due to their alliance with Japan, on December 11<sup>th</sup>, the Germans (and the Italians) declared war on the US.
- Once war was on the US needed to, update its military (expanding in particular the army’s air corps – later known as the air force), institute the draft, and call for enlistments. The US conscripted over ten million men ages 20-44 by 1945. Nine million were in uniform.
- Hysteria in the US led to Federal Bureau of Investigation arrests of 2,541 citizens of Axis (enemy) countries within one week, along with the eventual Japanese Internment led by General John L. DeWitt under Executive Order #9066. Throughout the war, Americans of Japanese descent (US citizens) were persecuted and robbed of their homes and livelihoods, losing hundreds of millions of dollars of personal property. This was despite the fact that Japanese-Americans served in both the Pacific and in Europe, with the 422<sup>nd</sup> Combat Team being the most decorated in the army. After 1943, FDR allowed Japanese interns who passed loyalty tests to go home, and by 1944 the camps were emptied, but most people had little to nothing to which to return.

## Increases in Federal Power:

- The federal propaganda of World War II went far beyond that of World War I, having been expanded by FDR’s administration during the Great Depression. One of FDR’s favorite methods was his “Fireside Chats.
- FDR ended his anti-business rhetoric of the Great Depression, though, and argued for

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big-business to produce for the war. 82% of government contracts were awarded to the country's top one-hundred corporations. \$240 billion was paid out and as a result over a half million small businesses collapsed during the war. By 1942 one-third of US production was for the war with vital industries getting millions to increase production. By war's end the federal government had put \$320 billion into the US economy, with production exceeding expectations.

- Office of Price Administration (1941) – set the prices for critical war goods.
- Office of War Mobilization (1943) – coordinated the production and distribution of goods and military supplies.
- Taxes were raised.
- War Bonds – Series E bonds (often sold at twenty-five or fifty dollars) were pushed via the alliance between government and Hollywood.
- Smith-Connally War *Labor Disputes Act* (1943) set up a War Labor Board to negotiate an end to wartime strikes under threat of federal takeover. Coal mines, railroads, and some other industries were federalized.
- GI Bill of Rights (1944) gave financial and educational benefits to veterans after the war.
- The federal government: instituted rationing (cotton, silk, gasoline, metal) and recycling programs (paper, metal, rubber), encouraged garment makers to reduce excess fabric from clothing designs (e.g. lapels, cuffs, and the creation of the two-piece bathing suit as “patriotic chic”), pushed for thermostats to be set at 65 degrees to save fuel, propagandized for the planting of victory gardens, and encouraged women to work in the factories via the Rosie the Riveter campaign.
- With such campaigns, popular culture and entertainment reflected the war effort and patriotism, e.g. Disney, Bugs Bunny, Wonder Woman, and movies like *Holiday Inn* and *Casablanca*. In particular, Hollywood meshed with government when entertainers such as Bob Hope joined the USO to entertain the troops.

## The War in Europe:

1943-44, the US was involved in Operation Torch (invasion of Africa), Operation Husky (invasion of Sicily), Operation Avalanche (mainland Italy invasion), and Operation Overlord (Normandy, France, “D-Day” - June 6, 1944). By August, the allies had liberated Paris and by November had pushed the Germans beyond the Rhine River. The Battle of the Bulge in December of 1944 was Hitler's final effort to stop the Allied invasion of Germany, but by 1944's

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end the Allies controlled all of Italy and on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Germany surrendered.

## The War in the Pacific:

Some of the major battles involving US forces were: Battle of Coral Sea (May 1942), Midway Island (June 1942), Guadalcanal Island (Nov. 1942), Battle of Leyte Gulf (Oct 1944), Iwo Jima (Feb.-March 1945, and Okinawa (April-June 1945). Atomic bombs were dropped in August of 1945 on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, and on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the Japanese surrendered.

## Diplomacy of the War:

- Before US entry into the war, Roosevelt met with Churchill in Newfoundland in August of 1941, where they produced the Atlantic Charter. This document set forth US-UK goals for the postwar world, which included: Wilsonian self-determination for countries, freedom of trade and of the seas, no territorial gains from the war, and the establishment of a permanent, world-wide, general security organization.
- November 27<sup>th</sup> – December 1, 1943 – The Big Three (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) met in Tehran (Iran) to discuss the war and peace.
- Soviets wanted to established control over provincial governments in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria, which had communist-led governments and eventually Czechoslovakia and Hungary became communist, though for a time managed to resist.
- The Big Three met in the city of Yalta in Crimea, Ukraine, along the Black Sea to discuss the war and peace. The USSR wanted: its “sphere of influence” over Eastern Europe recognized, a weakening of Germany, the economic rebuilding of the USSR, and post-war cooperation between the allies. The US wanted to constrict USSR controls over Eastern Europe, to get a Soviet declaration of war on Japan, and the USSR’s support for the United Nations. The USSR was allowed to keep what it had taken or could easily take, and the US got what it wanted, as well. Churchill, though, was not pleased with the expansion of Soviet power in Europe.
- After FDR’s death, Harry Truman replaced his presence diplomatically at the Potsdam Conference in Germany, from July-August 1945. The allies discussed the end of the war with Japan. Truman announced the A-bomb to deter the USSR from expanding into Asia, but Stalin knew of the bomb from espionage and the Soviets were advancing one of their own. The conference issued the Potsdam Declaration, calling for the unconditional surrender (the Japanese wanted a negotiated one) of the Japanese, lest they face total destruction.

With the end of World War II, the US and the USSR were left in a bipolar-configuration of power, meaning they were the world’s two superpowers at ideological and geostrategic odds with each other. The war itself and subsequent Cold War, thus, established

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that the federal government of the US was and would continue to be a dominant force in the lives of Americans both as employer and regulator.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*



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Walter Rosenblum, "D Day Rescue, Omaha Beach," via [Library of Congress](#).

## I. Introduction

The 1930s and 1940s were trying times. A global economic crisis gave way to a global war that would become the deadliest and most destructive in human history. Perhaps 80 million lost their lives during World War II. Moreover, the war unleashed the most fearsome wartime technology that has ever been used in war. It saw industrialized genocide and nearly threatened the eradication of an entire people. And when it ended, the United States found itself alone as the world's greatest superpower, armed with the world's greatest economy and looking forward to a prosperous consumers' economy. But of course the war would raise as many questions as it would set-

tle, unleashing new social forces at home and abroad that would confront new generations of Americans to come.

## II. The Origins of the Pacific War

While the United States joined the war in 1941, two years after Europe exploded into conflict in 1939, the path to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the surprise attack that threw the United States headlong into war, began much earlier. For the Empire of Japan, the war had begun a decade before Pearl Harbor.

On September 18, 1931, a small explosion tore up railroad tracks controlled by the Japanese-owned

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South Manchuria Railway near the city of Shenyang (Mukden) in the Chinese province of Manchuria. The railway company condemned the bombing as the work of anti-Japanese Chinese dissidents. Evidence, though, suggests that the initial explosion was neither an act of Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment nor an accident, but an elaborate ruse planned by the Japanese to provide a basis for invasion. In response, the privately operated Japanese Guandong (Kwangtung) army began shelling the Shenyang garrison the next day, and the garrison fell before nightfall. Hungry for Chinese territory and witnessing the weakness and disorganization of Chinese forces, but under the pretense of protecting Japanese citizens and investments, the Japanese Imperial Army ordered a full-scale invasion of Manchuria. The invasion was swift. Without a centralized Chinese army, the Japanese quickly defeated isolated Chinese warlords and by the end of February 1932, all of Manchuria was firmly under Japanese control. Japan established the nation of Manchukuo out of the former province of Manchuria.

This seemingly small skirmish—known—known by the Chinese as the September 18 Incident and the Japanese as the Manchurian Incident—sparked a war that would last thirteen years and claim the lives of over 35 million people. Comprehending Japanese motivations for attacking China, and the grueling stalemate of the ensuing war, are crucial for understanding Japan's seemingly unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, and,

therefore, for understanding the involvement of the United States in World War II as well.

Despite their rapid advance into Manchuria, the Japanese put off the invasion of China for nearly three years. Japan occupied a precarious domestic and international position after the September 18 Incident. At home, Japan was riven by political factionalism due to its stagnating economy. Leaders were torn as to whether to address modernization and lack of natural resources through unilateral expansion—the conquest of resource-rich areas such as Manchuria to export raw materials to domestic Japanese industrial bases such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki—or international cooperation—particularly a philosophy of pan-Asianism in an anti-Western coalition would push the colonial powers out of Asia. Ultimately, after a series of political crises and assassinations enflamed tensions, pro-war elements within the Japanese military triumphed over the more moderate civilian government. Japan committed itself to aggressive military expansion.

Chinese leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang appealed to the League of Nations for assistance against Japan. The United States supported the Chinese protest, proclaiming the Stimson Doctrine in January 1932, which refused to recognize any state established as a result of Japanese aggression. Meanwhile, the League of Nations sent Englishman Victor Bulwer-Lytton to investigate the September 18 Incident. After a six-month investigation, Bulwer-

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Lytton found the Japanese guilty of inciting the September 18 incident and demanded the return of Manchuria to China. The Japanese withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933.

Japan isolated itself from the world. Its diplomatic isolation empowered radical military leaders who could point to Japanese military success in Manchuria and compare it to the diplomatic failures of the civilian government. The military took over Japanese policy. And in the military's eyes, the conquest of China would not only provide for Japan's industrial needs, it would secure Japanese supremacy in East Asia.

The Japanese launched a full-scale invasion of China. It assaulted the Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937 and routed the forces of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army led by Chiang Kai-shek. The broken Chinese army gave up Beijing (Beijing) to the Japanese on August 8, Shanghai on November 26, and the capital, Nanjing (Nanking), on December 13. Between 250,000 and 300,000 people were killed, and tens of thousands of women were raped, when the Japanese besieged and then sacked Nanjing. The Western press labeled it the Rape of Nanjing. To halt the invading enemy, Chiang Kai-shek adopted a scorched-earth strategy of “trading space for time.” His Nationalist government retreated inland, burning villages and destroying dams, and established a new capital at the Yangtze River port of Chongqing (Chungking). Although the Nationalist's scorched-

earth policy hurt the Japanese military effort, it alienated scores of dislocated Chinese civilians and became a potent propaganda tool of the emerging Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Americans read about the brutal fighting in China, but the United States lacked both the will and the military power to oppose the Japanese invasion. After the gut-wrenching carnage of World War I, many Americans retreated toward “isolationism” by opposing any involvement in the conflagrations burning in Europe and Asia. And even if Americans wished to intervene, their military was lacking. The Japanese army was a technologically advanced force consisting of 4,100,000 million men and 900,000 Chinese collaborators—and that was in China alone. The Japanese military was armed with modern rifles, artillery, armor, and aircraft. By 1940, the Japanese navy was the third-largest and among the most technologically advanced in the world.

Still, Chinese Nationalists lobbied Washington for aid. Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Soong May-ling—known to the American public as Madame Chiang—led the effort. Born into a wealthy Chinese merchant family in 1898, Madame Chiang spent much of her childhood in the United States and had graduated from Wellesley College 1917 with a major in English literature. In contrast to her gruff husband, Madame Chiang was charming and able to use her knowledge of American culture and values to garner support for her husband and his government. But while the

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United States denounced Japanese aggression, it took no action.

As Chinese Nationalists fought for survival, the Communist Party was busy collecting people and supplies in the Northwestern Shaanxi Province. China had been at war with itself when the Japanese came. Nationalists battled a stubborn communist insurgency. In 1935 the Nationalists threw the communists out of the fertile Chinese coast, but an ambitious young commander named Mao Zedong recognized the power of the Chinese peasant population. In Shaanxi, Mao recruited from the local peasantry, building his force from a meager 7,000 survivors at the end of the Long March in 1935 to a robust 1.2 million members by the end of the war.

Although Japan had conquered much of the country, the Nationalists regrouped and the Communists re-armed. An uneasy truce paused the country's civil war and refocused efforts on the invaders. The Chinese could not dislodge the Japanese, but they could stall their advance. The war mired in stalemate.

### III. The Origins of the European War

Across the globe in Europe, the continent's major powers were still struggling with the after-effects of the First World War when the global economic crisis spiraled much of the continent into chaos. Germany's Weimer Republic collapsed with the economy and out of the ashes emerged Adolph Hitler's National



*"Adolf Hitler salutes troops of the Condor Legion who fought alongside Spanish Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War, during a rally upon their return to Germany, 1939." Hugo Jaeger—Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images. <http://life.time.com/world-war-ii/nazi-propaganda-and-the-myth-of-aryan-invincibility/#ixzz2Wd38MUY9>*

Socialists—the Nazis. Championing German racial supremacy, fascist government, and military expansionism, Adolph Hitler rose to power and, after aborted attempts to take power in Germany, became Chancellor in 1933 and the Nazis conquered German institutions. Democratic traditions were smashed. Leftist groups were purged. Hitler repudiated the punitive damages and strict military limitations of the Treaty of Versailles. He rebuilt the German military and navy. He reoccupied regions lost during the war and re-militarized the Rhineland, along the border with France. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Hitler and Mussolini—the fascist Italian leader who had risen to power in the 1920s—intervened for the Spanish fascists, toppling the communist Spanish Republican Party. Britain and France stood by warily and began to rebuild their militaries, anxious in the face of a renewed Germany but still unwilling to draw Europe into another bloody war.

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In his autobiographical manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler advocated for the unification of Europe's German peoples under one nation and that nation's need for *lebensraum*, or living space, particularly in Eastern Europe, to supply Germans with the land and resources needed for future prosperity. The *untermenschen* ("lesser" humans) would have to go. Once in power, Hitler worked toward the twin goals of unification and expansion.

In 1938 Germany annexed Austria and set its sights on the Sudetenland, a large, ethnically German area of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France, alarmed but still anxious to avoid war, the major powers agreed—without Czechoslovakia's input—that Germany could annex the region in return for a promise to stop all future German aggression. It was thought that Hitler could be appeased, but it became clear that his ambitions would continue pushing German expansion. In March 1939, Hitler took the rest of Czechoslovakia and began to make demands on Poland. Britain and France promised war. And war came.

Hitler signed a secret agreement—the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact—with the Soviet Union that coordinated the splitting of Poland between the two powers and promised non-aggression thereafter. The European war began when the German *Wehrmacht* invaded Poland on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939. Britain and France declared war two days later and mobilized their armies. Britain and France



*Huge rallies like this one in Nuremberg displayed the sheer number of armed and ready troop and instilled a fierce loyalty to (or fearful silence about) Hitler and the National Socialist Party in Germany. Photograph, November, 9, 1935. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reichsparteitag_1935.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reichsparteitag\\_1935.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reichsparteitag_1935.jpg).*

hoped that the Poles could hold out for three to four months, enough time for the Allies to intervene. Poland fell in three weeks. The German army, anxious to avoid the rigid, grinding war of attrition that took so many millions in the stalemate of WWI, built their new modern army for speed and maneuverability. German doctrine emphasized the use of tanks, planes, and motorized infantry (infantry that used trucks for



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transportation instead of marching) to concentrate forces, smash front lines, and wreak havoc behind the enemy's defenses. It was called *blitzkrieg*, or lightening war.

After the fall of Poland, France and its British allies braced for an inevitable German attack. Throughout the winter of 1939-40, however, fighting was mostly confined to smaller fronts in Norway. Belligerents called it the *Sitzkrieg* (sitting war). But in May 1940, Hitler launched his attack into Western Europe. Mirroring the German's Schlieffen Plan of 1914 in the previous war, Germany attacked through the Netherlands and Belgium to avoid the prepared French defenses along the French-German border. Poland had fallen in three weeks; France lasted only a few weeks more. By June, Hitler was posing for photographs in front of the Eiffel Tower. Germany split France in half. Germany occupied and governed the north, and the south would be ruled under a puppet government in Vichy.

With France under heel, Hitler turned to Britain. Operation Sea Lion—the planned German invasion of the British Isles—required air superiority over the English Channel. From June until October the German *Luftwaffe* fought the Royal Air Force (RAF) for control of the skies. Despite having fewer planes, British pilots won the so-called Battle of Britain, saving the islands from immediate invasion and prompting the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to declare, “never before in the field of



*The German aerial bombing of London left thousands homeless, hurt, or dead. This child sits among the rubble with a rather quizzical look on his face, as adults ponder their fate in the background. Toni Frissell, "[Abandoned boy holding a stuffed toy animal amid ruins following German aerial bombing of London]," 1945. [Library of Congress](#).*

human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.”

If Britain was safe from invasion, it was not immune from additional air attacks. Stymied in the Battle of Britain, Hitler began the Blitz—a bombing campaign against cities and civilians. Hoping to crush the British will to fight, the *Luftwaffe* bombed the cities of London, Liverpool, and Manchester every night from September to the following May. Children were sent far into the countryside to live with strangers to shield them from the bombings. Remaining residents took refuge in shelters and subway tunnels, emerging each morning to put out fires and bury the

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dead. The Blitz ended in June 1941, when Hitler, confident that Britain was temporarily out of the fight, launched Operation Barbarossa—the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Hoping to capture agricultural lands, seize oil fields, and break the military threat of Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler broke the two powers' 1939 non-aggression pact and, on June 22, invaded the Soviet Union. It was the largest land invasion in history. France and Poland had fallen in weeks, and German officials hoped to break Russia before the winter. And initially, the *blitzkrieg* worked. The German military quickly conquered enormous swaths of land and netted hundreds of thousands of prisoners. But Russia was too big and the Soviets were willing to sacrifice millions to stop the fascist advance. After recovering from the initial shock of the German invasion, Stalin moved his factories east of the Urals, out of range of the *Luftwaffe*. He ordered his retreating army to adopt a "scorched earth" policy, to move east and destroy food, rails, and shelters to stymie the advancing German army. The German army slogged forward. It split into three pieces and stood at the gates of Moscow, Stalingrad and Leningrad, but supply lines now stretched thousands of miles, Soviet infrastructure had been destroyed, partisans harried German lines, and the brutal Russian winter arrived. Germany had won massive gains but the winter found Germany exhausted and overextended. In the north, the German Army starved Leningrad to death during an interminable siege; in the south, at Stalingrad, the two armies bled

themselves to death in the destroyed city; and, in the center, on the outskirts of Moscow, in sight of the capital city, the German army faltered and fell back. It was the Soviet Union that broke Hitler's army. Twenty-five million Soviet soldiers and civilians died during the "The Great Patriotic War" and roughly 80% of all German casualties during the war came on the Eastern Front. The German army and its various conscripts suffered 850,000 casualties at the Battle of Stalingrad alone. In December 1941, Germany began its long retreat.

## IV. The United States and the European War

While Hitler marched across Europe, the Japanese continued their war in the Pacific. In 1939 the United States dissolved its trade treaties with Japan. In 1940 the American Neutrality Acts cut off supplies of necessary war materials by embargoing oil, steel, rubber, and other vital goods. It was hoped that economic pressure would shut down the Japanese war machine. Instead, Japan's resource-starved military launched invasions across the Pacific to sustain its war effort. The Japanese called their new empire the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and, with the cry of "Asia for the Asians," made war against European powers and independent nations throughout the region. Diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States collapsed. The United States demanded Japan withdraw from China; Japan considered the oil embargo a *de facto* declaration of war.

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Japanese military planners, believing that American intervention was inevitable, planned a coordinated Pacific offensive to neutralize the United States and other European powers and provide time for Japan to complete its conquests and fortify its positions. On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Japanese military planners hoped to destroy enough battleships and aircraft carriers to cripple American naval power for years. 2,400 Americans were killed in the attack.

American isolationism fell at Pearl Harbor. Japan had assaulted Hong Kong, the Philippines, and American holdings throughout the Pacific, but it was the attack on Hawaii that threw the United States into a global conflict. Franklin Roosevelt called December 7 “a date which will live in infamy” and called for a declaration of war, which Congress answered within hours. Within a week of Pearl Harbor the United States had declared war on the entire Axis, turning two previously separate conflicts into a true world war.

The American war began slowly. Britain had stood alone militarily in Europe, but American supplies had bolstered their resistance. Hitler unleashed his U-boat “wolf packs” into the Atlantic Oceans with orders to sink anything carrying aid to Britain, but Britain and the United States’ superior tactics and technology won them the Battle of the Atlantic. British code



In 1944, Allied forces began a bombing campaign of railroad and oil targets in Bucharest, part of the wider policy of bombing expeditions meant to incapacitate German transportation. Bucharest was considered the number one oil target in Europe. Photograph, August 1, 1943. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:B-24D%27s\\_fly\\_over\\_Polesti\\_during\\_World\\_War\\_II.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:B-24D%27s_fly_over_Polesti_during_World_War_II.jpg).

breakers cracked Germany’s radio codes and the surge of intelligence, dubbed *Ultra*, coupled with massive naval convoys escorted by destroyers armed with sonar and depth charges, gave the advantage to the Allies and by 1942, Hitler’s *Kriegsmarine* was losing ships faster than they could be built. (For the United States in the European Front, see, for instance, John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990); Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).))

In North Africa in 1942, British victory at El Alamein began pushing the Germans back. In November, the first American combat troops entered the European war, landing in French Morocco and pushing the Germans east while the British pushed west. By 1943, the Allies had pushed Axis forces out of Africa. In January President Roosevelt and Prime Minister

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Churchill met at Casablanca to discuss the next step of the European war. Churchill convinced Roosevelt to chase the Axis up Italy, into the “soft underbelly” of Europe. Afterward, Roosevelt announcing to the press that the Allies would accept nothing less than unconditional surrender.

Meanwhile, the Army Air Force (AAF) sent hundreds (and eventually thousands) of bombers to England in preparation for a massive Strategic Bombing Campaign against Germany. The plan was to bomb Germany around the clock. American bombers hit German ball-bearing factories, rail yards, oil fields and manufacturing centers during the day, while the British Royal Air Force (RAF) carpet-bombed German cities at night. Flying in formation, they initially flew unescorted, since many believed that bombers equipped with defensive firepower flew too high and too fast to be attacked. However, advanced German technology allowed fighters to easily shoot down the lumbering bombers. On some disastrous missions, the Germans shot down almost 50% of American aircraft. However, the advent and implementation of a long-range escort fighter let the bombers hit their targets more accurately while fighters confronted opposing German aircraft.

In the wake of the Soviet’s victory at Stalingrad, the “Big Three” (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) met in Tehran in November 1943. Dismissing Africa and Italy as a side-show, Stalin demanded that Britain and



*Bombings throughout Europe caused complete devastation in some areas, leveling beautiful ancient cities like Cologne, Germany. Cologne experienced an astonishing 262 separate air raids by Allied forces, leaving the city in ruins as in these the photograph above. Amazingly, the Cologne Cathedral stands nearly undamaged even after being hit numerous times, while the area around it crumbles. Photograph, April 24, 1945. [Wikimedia, http://commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Koeln\\_1945.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Koeln_1945.jpg).*

the United States invade France to relive pressure on the Eastern Front. Churchill was hesitant, but Roosevelt was eager. The invasion was tentatively scheduled for 1944.

Back in Italy, the “soft underbelly” turned out to be much tougher than Churchill had imagined. Italy’s narrow, mountainous terrain gave the defending Axis the advantage. Movement up the peninsula was slow and in some places conditions returned to the trench-like warfare of WWI. Americans attempted to land troops behind them at Anzio on the western coast of Italy but they became surrounded and suffered heavy casualties. But the Allies pushed up the peninsula, Mussolini’s government revolted, and a new Italian government quickly made peace.

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On the day the American army entered Rome, American, British and Canadian forces launched Operation Overlord, the long-awaited invasion of France. D-Day, as it became popularly known, was the largest amphibious assault in history. American general Dwight Eisenhower was uncertain enough of the attack's chances that the night before the invasion he wrote two speeches: one for success and one for failure. The Allied landings at Normandy were successful, and although progress across France was much slower than hoped for, Paris was liberated roughly two months later. Allied bombing expeditions meanwhile continued to level German cities and industrial capacity. Perhaps 400,000 German civilians were killed by allied bombing.

The Nazis were crumbling on both fronts. Hitler tried but failed to turn the war in his favor in the west. The Battle of the Bulge failed to drive the Allies back into the British Channel, but the delay cost the Allies the winter. The invasion of Germany would have to wait, while the Soviet Union continued its relentless push westward, ravaging German populations in retribution for German war crimes.

German counterattacks in the east failed to dislodge the Soviet advance, destroying any last chance Germany might have had to regain the initiative. 1945 dawned with the end of European war in sight. The Big Three met again at Yalta in the Soviet

Union, where they reaffirmed the demand for Hitler's unconditional surrender and began to plan for postwar Europe.

The Soviet Union reached Germany in January, and the Americans crossed the Rhine in March. In late April American and Soviet troops met at the Elbe while the Soviets, pushed relentlessly by Stalin to reach Berlin first, took the capital city in May, days after Hitler and his high command had committed suicide in a city bunker. Germany was conquered. The European war was over. Allied leaders met again, this time at Potsdam, Germany, where it was decided that Germany would be divided into pieces according to current Allied occupation, with Berlin likewise divided, pending future elections. Stalin also agreed to join the fight against Japan in approximately three months.

## V. The United States and the Japanese War

As Americans celebrated "V.E." (Victory in Europe) Day, they redirected their full attention to the still-raging Pacific War. As in Europe, the war in the Pacific started slowly. After Pearl Harbor, the American-controlled Philippine archipelago fell to Japan. After running out of ammunition and supplies, the garrison of American and Filipino soldiers surrendered. The prisoners were marched 80 miles to their prisoner of war camp without food, water, or rest. 10,000 died on the Bataan Death March.



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But as Americans mobilized their armed forces, the tide turned. In the summer of 1942, American naval victories at the Battle of the Coral Sea and the aircraft carrier duel at the Battle of Midway crippled Japan's Pacific naval operations. To dislodge Japan's hold over the Pacific, the US military began island hopping: attacking island after island, bypassing the strongest but seizing those capable of holding airfields to continue pushing Japan out of the region. Combat was vicious. At Guadalcanal American soldiers saw Japanese soldiers launch suicidal charges rather than surrender. Many Japanese soldiers refused to be taken prisoner or to take prisoners themselves. Such tactics, coupled with American racial prejudice, turned the Pacific Theater into a more brutal and barbarous conflict than the European Theater.

Japanese defenders fought tenaciously. Few battles were as one-sided as the Battle of the Philippine Sea, or what the Americans called the Japanese counterattack "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot." Japanese soldiers bled the Americans in their advance across the Pacific. At Iwo Jima, an eight-square-mile island of volcanic rock, 17,000 Japanese soldiers held the island against 70,000 marines for over a month. At the cost of nearly their entire force, they inflicted almost 30,000 casualties before the island was lost.

By February 1945, American bombers were in range of the mainland. Bombers hit Japan's industrial

facilities but suffered high casualties. To spare bomber crews from dangerous daylight raids, and to achieve maximum effect against Japan's wooden cities, many American bombers dropped incendiary weapons that created massive fire storms and wreaked havoc on Japanese cities. Over sixty Japanese cities were fire-bombed. American fire bombs killed 100,000 civilians in Tokyo in March 1945.

In June 1945, after eighty days of fighting and tens of thousands of casualties, the Americans captured the island of Okinawa. The mainland of Japan was open before them. It was a viable base from which to launch a full invasion of the Japanese homeland and end the war.

Estimates varied but, given the tenacity of Japanese soldiers fighting on islands far from their home, some officials estimated that an invasion of the Japanese mainland could cost half-a-million American casualties and perhaps millions of Japanese civilians. Historians debate the many motivations that ultimately drove the Americans to use atomic weapons against Japan, and many American officials criticized the decision, but these would be the numbers later cited by government leaders and military officials to justify their use.

Early in the war, fearing that the Germans might develop an atomic bomb, the U.S. government launched the Manhattan Project, a hugely expensive,

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ambitious program to harness atomic energy and create a single weapon capable of leveling entire cities. The Americans successfully exploded the world's first nuclear device, Trinity, in New Mexico in July 1945. (Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, where the bomb was designed, later recalled that the event reminded him of Hindu scripture: "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.") Two more bombs—"Fat Man" and "Little Boy"—were built and detonated over two Japanese cities in August. Hiroshima was hit on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Over 100,000 civilians were killed. Nagasaki followed on August 9<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps 80,000 civilians were killed. (Ibid.)

Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of Japan on August 14<sup>th</sup>. The following day, aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, delegates from the Japanese government formally signed their surrender. World War II was finally over.

## VI. Soldier's Experiences

Almost eighteen million men served in World War II. Volunteers rushed to join the military after Pearl Harbor, but the majority—over 10 million—were drafted into service. Volunteers could express their preference for assignment, and many preempted the draft by volunteering. Regardless, those recruits judged I-A, "fit for service," were moved into basic training, where soldiers were developed physically and trained in the basic use of weapons and military

equipment. Soldiers were indoctrinated into the chain of command and introduced to military life. After basic, soldiers moved onto more specialized training. For example, combat infantrymen received additional weapons and tactical training and radio operators learned transmission codes and the operation of field radios. Afterward, an individual's experience varied depending upon what service he entered and to what theatre he was assigned.

Soldiers and marines bore the brunt of on-the-ground combat. After transportation to the front by trains, ships, and trucks, they could expect to march carrying packs weighing anywhere from 20-50 pounds of rations, ammunition, bandages, tools, clothing, and miscellaneous personal items in addition to their weapons. Sailors, once deployed, spent months at sea operating their assigned vessels. Larger ships, particularly aircraft carriers, were veritable floating cities. In most, sailors lived and worked in cramped conditions, often sleeping in bunks stacked in rooms housing dozens of sailors. Senior officers received small rooms of their own. Sixty-thousand American sailors lost their lives in the war.

During World War II the Air Force was still a branch of the U.S. Army. Soldiers in the served on ground crews and air crews. World War II saw the institutionalization of massive bombing campaigns against cities and industrial production. Large bombers like the B-17 Flying Fortress required pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio operators,

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and four dedicated machine gunners. Soldiers on bombing raids left from bases in England or Italy, or from Pacific Islands, endured hours of flight before approaching enemy territory. At high altitude, and without pressurized cabins, crews used oxygen tanks to breathe and on-board temperatures plummeted. Once in enemy airspace crews confronted enemy fighters and anti-aircraft “flak” from the ground. While fighter pilots flew as escorts, the Air Corps suffered heavy casualties. Tens of thousands of airmen lost their lives.

On-the ground conditions varied. Soldiers in Europe endured freezing winters, impenetrable French hedgerows, Italian mountain ranges, and dense forests. Germans fought with a Western mentality familiar to Americans. Soldiers in the Pacific endured heat and humidity, monsoons, jungles, and tropical diseases. And they confronted an unfamiliar foe. Americans, for instance, could understand surrender as prudent; many Japanese soldiers saw it as cowardice. What Americans saw as a fanatical waste of life, the Japanese saw as brave and honorable. Atrocities flourished in the Pacific at a level unmatched in Europe.

## VII. The Wartime Economy

Economies win wars no less than militaries. The war converted American factories to wartime production, reawakened Americans’ economic might, armed Allied belligerents and the American armed forces, effectively pulled America out of the Great Depres-



*Much like during WWI, citizens during WWII were urged to buy war bonds to support the effort overseas. Rallies like this one appealed to Americans’ sense of patriotism. [Wikimedia](#).*

sion, and ushered in an era of unparalleled economic prosperity.

Roosevelt’s New Deal had ameliorated the worst of the Depression, but the economy still limped its way forward into the 1930s. But then Europe fell into war, and, despite its isolationism, Americans were glad to sell the Allies arms and supplies. And then Pearl Harbor changed everything. The United States drafted the economy into war service. The “sleeping giant” mobilized its unrivaled economic capacity to wage worldwide war.

Governmental entities such as the War Production Board and the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion managed economic production for the war effort and economic output exploded. An economy that was unable to provide work for a quarter of the work force less than a decade earlier

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now struggled to fill vacant positions.

Government spending during the four years of war *doubled* all federal spending in all of American history up to that point. The budget deficit soared, but, just as Depression Era economists had counseled, the government's massive intervention annihilated unemployment and propelled growth. The economy that came out of the war looked nothing like the one that had begun it.

Military production came at the expense of the civilian consumer economy. Appliance and automobile manufacturers converted their plants to produce weapons and vehicles. Consumer choice was foreclosed. Every American received rationing cards and, legally, goods such as gasoline, coffee, meat, cheese, butter, processed food, firewood, and sugar could not be purchased without them. The housing industry was shut down, and the cities became overcrowded.

But the wartime economy boomed. The Roosevelt administration urged citizens to save their earnings or buy war bonds to prevent inflation. Bond drives were held nationally and headlined by Hollywood celebrities. Such drives were hugely successful. They not only funded much of the war effort, they helped to tame inflation as well. So too did tax rates. The federal government raised income taxes and boosted the top marginal tax rate to 94%.



*Women came into the workforces in greater numbers than ever before during WWII. With vacancies left by deployed men and new positions created by war production, posters like this iconic "We Can Do It!" urged women to support the war effort by going to work in America's factories. Poster for Westinghouse, 1942. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:We_Can_Do_It!.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:We\\_Can\\_Do\\_It!.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:We_Can_Do_It!.jpg).*

With the economy booming and twenty million American workers placed into military service, unemployment virtually disappeared. And yet limits remained. Many defense contractors still refused to hire black workers. A. Philip Randolph in 1941 threatened to lead a march on Washington in protest, compelling Roosevelt to issue Executive Order Number 8802, the Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industries Act, which established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to end racial

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discrimination in the federal government and the defense industry.

During the war, more and more African Americans continued to leave the agrarian south for the industrial north. And as more and more men joined the military, and more and more positions went unfilled, women joined the workforce en masse. Other American producers looked outside of the United States, southward, to Mexico, to fill its labor force. Between 1942 and 1964, the United States contracted thousands of Mexican nationals to work in American agriculture and railroads in the Bracero Program. Jointly administered by the State Department, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Justice, the binational agreement secured five million contracts across twenty four states.

With factory work proliferating across the country and agricultural labor experiencing severe labor shortages, the presidents of Mexico and the U.S. signed an agreement in July 1942 to bring the first group of legally contracted workers to California. Discriminatory policies towards people of Mexican descent prevented bracero contracts in Texas until 1947. The Bracero Program survived the war, enshrined in law until the 1960s, when the United States liberalized its immigration laws. Though *braceros* suffered exploitative labor conditions, for the men who participated the program was a mixed blessing. Interviews with *ex-braceros* captured the complexity. “They would call us pigs ... they didn’t have to treat us that way,”

one said of his employers, while another said, “For me it was a blessing, the United States was a blessing ... it is a nation I fell in love with because of the excess work and good pay.” After the exodus of Mexican migrants during the Depression, the program helped to reestablish Mexican migration, institutionalized migrant farm work across much of the country, and further planted a Mexican presence in the southern and western United States.

### VIII. Women and World War II

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration had encouraged all able-bodied American women to help the war effort. He considered the role of women in the war critical for American victory and the public expected women to assume various functions to free men for active military service. While the majority of women opted to remain at home or volunteer with charitable organizations, many went to work or donned a military uniform.

World War II brought unprecedented labor opportunities for American women. Industrial labor, an occupational sphere dominated by men, shifted in part to women for the duration of wartime mobilization. Women applied for jobs in converted munitions factories. The iconic illustrated image of “Rosie the Riveter,” a muscular woman dressed in coveralls with her hair in a kerchief and inscribed with the phrase, “We Can Do It!” would come stand for female factory labor during the war. But women



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also worked in various auxiliary positions for the government. Although often a traditionally gendered female occupation, over a million administrative jobs at the local, state, and national levels were transferred from men to women for the duration of the war.

For women who elected not to work, many volunteer opportunities presented themselves. The American Red Cross, the largest charitable organization in the nation, encouraged women to volunteer with local city chapters. Millions of females organized community social events for families, packed and shipped almost a half million ton of medical supplies overseas, and prepared twenty-seven million care packages of nonperishable items for American and other Allied prisoners of war. The American Red Cross further required all women volunteers to certify as nurse's aides, providing an extra benefit and work opportunity for hospital staffs that suffered severe manpower losses. Other charity organizations, such as church and synagogue affiliates, benevolent associations, and social club auxiliaries, gave women further outlets for volunteer work.

Military service was another option for women who wanted to join the war effort. Over 350,000 women served in several all-female units of the military branches. The Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the Coast Guard's SPARs (named for the Coast Guard motto, *Semper Paratus*, "Always Ready"),

and Marine Corps units gave women the opportunity to serve as either commissioned officers or enlisted members at military bases at home and abroad. The Nurse Corps Reserves alone commissioned 105,000 Army and Navy nurses recruited by the American Red Cross. Military nurses worked at base hospitals, mobile medical units, and onboard hospital "mercy" ships.

Jim Crow segregation in both the civilian and military sectors remained a problem for black women who wanted to join the war effort. Even after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 in 1941, supervisors that hired black women still often relegated them to the most menial tasks on factory floors. Segregation was further upheld in factory lunchrooms and many black women were forced to work at night to keep them separate from whites. In the military, only the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Nurse Corps Reserves accepted black women for active service, and the Army set a limited quota of ten percent of total end strength for black female officers and enlisted women and segregated black units on active duty. The American Red Cross, meanwhile, recruited only four hundred black nurses for the Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, and black Army and Navy nurses worked in segregated military hospitals on bases stateside and overseas.

And for all of the postwar celebration of Rosie the Riveter, after the war ended the men returned and most women voluntarily left the work force or lost

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their jobs. Meanwhile, former military women faced a litany of obstacles in obtaining veteran's benefits during their transition to civilian life. The nation that beckoned the call for assistance to millions of women during the four-year crisis hardly stood ready to accommodate their postwar needs and demands.

### IX. Race and World War II

World War II affected nearly every aspect of life in the United States, and America's racial relationships were not immune. African Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Jews, and Japanese Americans were profoundly impacted.

In early 1941, months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest black trade union in the nation, made headlines by threatening President Roosevelt with a march on Washington, D.C. In this "crisis of democracy," Randolph said, defense industries refused to hire African Americans and the armed forces remained segregated. In exchange for Randolph calling off the march, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, banning racial and religious discrimination in defense industries and establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to monitor defense industry hiring practices. While the armed forces would remain segregated throughout the war, and the FEPC had limited influence, the order showed that the federal government could stand against discrimination. The black workforce in defense



*The Tuskegee Airmen stand at attention as Major James A. Ellison returns the salute of Mac Ross, one of the first graduates of the Tuskegee cadets. The photograph shows the pride and poise of the Tuskegee Airmen, who continued a tradition of African Americans honorably serving a country that still considered them second-class citizens. Photograph, 1941. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First\\_Tuskegee\\_Class.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_Tuskegee_Class.jpg).*

industries rose from 3 percent in 1942 to 9 percent in 1945.

More than one million African Americans fought in the war. Most blacks served in segregated, non-combat units led by white officers. Some gains were made, however. The number of black officers increased from 5 in 1940 to over 7,000 in 1945. The all-black pilot squadrons, known as the Tuskegee Airmen, completed more than 1,500 missions, escorted heavy bombers into Germany, and earned several hundred merits and medals. Many bomber crews specifically requested the "Red Tail Angels" as escorts. And near the end of the war, the army and navy began integrating some of its platoons and facilities, before, in 1948, the U.S. government finally ordered the full integration of its armed forces.

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While black Americans served in the armed forces (though they were segregated), on the home front they became riveters and welders, rationed food and gasoline, and bought victory bonds. But many black Americans saw the war as an opportunity not only to serve their country but to improve it. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading black newspaper, spearheaded the “Double V” campaign. It called on African Americans to fight two wars: the war against Nazism and Fascism abroad and the war against racial inequality at home. To achieve victory, to achieve “real democracy,” the *Courier* encouraged its readers to enlist in the armed forces, volunteer on the home front, and fight against racial segregation and discrimination.

During the war, membership in the NAACP jumped tenfold, from 50,000 to 500,000. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was formed in 1942 and spearheaded the method of nonviolent direct action to achieve desegregation. Between 1940 and 1950, some 1.5 million southern blacks, the largest number than any other decade since the beginning of the Great Migration, also indirectly demonstrated their opposition to racism and violence by migrating out of the Jim Crow South to the North. But transitions were not easy. Racial tensions erupted in 1943 in a series of riots in cities such as Mobile, Beaumont, and Harlem. The bloodiest race riot occurred in Detroit and resulted in the death of 25 blacks and 9 whites. Still, the war ignited in African Americans an urgency for equality that they would carry with them into the subsequent years.



This photograph, originally from Jürgen Stroop's May 1943 report to Heinrich Himmler, it circulated throughout Europe and America as an image of the Nazi Party's brutality. The original German caption read: "Forcibly pulled out of dug-outs". [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stroop\\_Report\\_-\\_Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_Uprising\\_06b.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_06b.jpg).

Many Americans had to navigate American prejudice, and America's entry into the war left foreign nationals from the belligerent nations in a precarious position. The Federal Bureau of Investigation targeted numbers on suspicions of disloyalty for detainment, hearings, and possible internment under the Alien Enemy Act. Those who received an order for internment were sent to government camps secured by barbed wire and armed guards. Such internments were supposed to be for cause. Then, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal any persons from designated “exclusion zones”—which ultimately covered nearly a third of the country—at the discretion of military commanders. 30,000 Japanese Americans fought for the United States in World War II, but wartime anti-Japanese sentiment reinforced historical prejudices and, under the order, persons of Japanese descent,

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both immigrants and American citizens, were detained and placed under the custody of the War Relocation Authority, the civil agency that supervised their relocation to internment camps. They lost their homes and jobs. The policy indiscriminately targeted Japanese-descended populations. Individuals did not receive individual review prior to their internment. This policy of mass exclusion and detention affected over 110,000 individuals. 70,000 were American citizens.

In its 1982 report, *Personal Justice Denied*, the congressionally appointed Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that “the broad historical causes” shaping the relocation program were “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” Although the exclusion orders were found to have been constitutionally permissible under the vagaries of national security, they were later judged, even by the military and judicial leaders of the time, to have been a grave injustice against persons of Japanese descent. In 1988, President Reagan signed a law that formally apologized for internment and provided reparations to surviving internees.

But if actions taken during war would later prove repugnant, so too could inaction. As the Allies pushed into Germany and Poland, they uncovered the full extent of Hitler’s genocidal atrocities. The Allies liberated massive camp systems set up for the imprisonment, forced labor, and extermination of all those deemed racially, ideologically, or biologically

“unfit” by Nazi Germany. But the holocaust—the systematic murder of 11 million civilians, including 6 million Jews—had been underway for years. How did America respond?

Initially, American officials expressed little official concern for Nazi persecutions. At the first signs of trouble in the 1930s, the State Department and most U.S. embassies did relatively little to aid European Jews. Roosevelt publicly spoke out against the persecution, and even withdrew the U.S. ambassador to Germany after *Kristallnacht*. He pushed for the 1938 Evian Conference in France in which international leaders discussed the Jewish refugee problem and worked to expand Jewish immigration quotas by tens of thousands of people per year. But the conference came to nothing and the United States turned away countless Jewish refugees who requested asylum in the United States.

In 1939, the German ship *St. Louis* carried over 900 Jewish refugees. They could not find a country that would take them. The passengers could not receive visas under the United States’ quota system. A State Department wire to one passenger read that all must “await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas before they may be admissible into the United States.” The ship cabled the president for special privilege, but the president said nothing. The ship was forced to return back to Europe. Hundreds of the *St. Louis*’s passengers would perish in the Holocaust.

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Anti-Semitism still permeated the United States. Even if Roosevelt wanted to do more—it's difficult to trace his own thoughts and personal views—he judged the political price for increasing immigration quotas as too high. In 1938 and 1939 the U.S. Congress debated the Wagner-Rogers Bill, an act to allow 20,000 German-Jewish children into the United States. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt endorsed the measure but the president remained publicly silent. The bill was opposed by roughly two-thirds of the American public and was defeated. Historians speculate that Roosevelt, anxious to protect the New Deal and his rearmament programs, was unwilling to expend political capital to protect foreign groups that the American public had little interest in protecting.

Knowledge of the full extent of the Holocaust was slow in coming. When the war began, American officials, including Roosevelt, doubted initial reports of industrial death camps. But even when they conceded their existence, officials pointed to their genuinely limited options. The most plausible response was for the U.S. military was to bomb either the camps or the railroads leading to them, but those options were rejected by military and civilian officials who argued that it would do little to stop the deportations, would distract from the war effort, and could cause casualties among concentration camp prisoners. Whether bombing would have saved lives remains a hotly debated question.

Late in the war, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, himself born into a wealthy New York Jewish family, pushed through major changes in American policy. In 1944, he formed the War Refugees Board (WRB) and became a passionate advocate for Jewish refugees. The efforts of the WPB saved perhaps 200,000 Jews and 20,000 others. Morgenthau also convinced Roosevelt to issue a public statement condemning the Nazi's persecution. But it was already 1944, and such policies were far too little, far too late.

## X. Towards a Postwar World

Americans celebrated the end of the war. At home and abroad, the United States looked to create a postwar order that would guarantee global peace and domestic prosperity. Although the alliance-of-convenience with Stalin's Soviet Union would collapse, Americans nevertheless looked for the means to ensure postwar stability and economic security for returning veterans.

The inability of the League of Nations to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggressions caused many to question whether any global organization or agreements could ever ensure world peace. This included Franklin Roosevelt who, as Woodrow Wilson's Undersecretary of the Navy, witnessed the rejection of this idea by both the American people and the Senate. In 1941, Roosevelt believed that postwar security could be maintained by an informal



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agreement between what he termed “the Four Policemen”—the U.S., Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—instead of a rejuvenated League of Nations. But others, including Secretary of State Cordell Hull and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, disagreed and convinced Roosevelt to push for a new global organization. As the war ran its course, Roosevelt came around to the idea. And so did the American public. Pollster George Gallup noted a “profound change” in American attitudes. The United States had rejected membership in the League of Nations after World War I, and in 1937 only a third of Americans polled supported such an idea. But as war broke out in Europe, half of Americans did. America’s entry into the war bolstered support, and, by 1945, with the war closing, 81% of Americans favored the idea.

Whatever his support, Roosevelt had long showed enthusiasm for the ideas later enshrined in the United Nations charter. In January 1941, he announced his Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear—that all of the world’s citizens should enjoy. That same year he signed the Atlantic Charter with Churchill, which reinforced those ideas and added the right of self-determination and promised some sort of post-war economic and political cooperation. Roosevelt first used the phrase “united nations” to describe the Allied powers, not the subsequent post-war organization. But the name stuck. At Tehran in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill convinced Stalin to send a Soviet delegation to a

conference at Dumbarton Oaks, outside Washington D.C., in August 1944 where they agreed on the basic structure of the new organization. It would have a Security Council—the original “four policemen,” plus France—who would consult on how best to keep the peace, and when to deploy the military power of the assembled nations. According to one historian, the organization demonstrated an understanding that “only the Great Powers, working together, could provide real security.” But the plan was a kind of hybrid between Roosevelt’s policemen idea and a global organization of equal representation. There would also be a General Assembly, made up of all nations, an International Court of Justice, and a council for economic and social matters. Dumbarton Oaks was a mixed success—the Soviets especially expressed concern over how the Security Council would work—but the powers agreed to meet again in San Francisco between April and June 1945 for further negotiations. There, on June 26 1945, fifty nations signed the UN charter.

Anticipating victory in World War II, leaders not only looked to the postwar global order, they looked to the fate of returning American servicemen. American politicians and interest groups sought to avoid another economic depression—the economy had tanked after World War I—by gradually easing returning veterans back into the civilian economy. The brainchild of the head of the American Legion, William Atherton, the G.I. Bill won support from progressives and conservatives alike. Passed in 1944, the G.I. Bill

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was a multifaceted, multi-billion-dollar entitlement program that rewarded honorably discharged veterans with numerous benefits.

Faced with the prospect of over 15 million members of the armed services (including approximately 350,000 women) suddenly returning to civilian life, the G.I. Bill offered a bevy of inducements to slow their influx into the civilian workforce as reward their service with public benefits. The legislation offered a year's worth of unemployment benefits for veterans unable to secure work. About half of American veterans (8 million) received \$4 billion in unemployment benefits over the life of the bill. The G.I. Bill also made post-secondary education a reality for many. The Veterans Administration (VA) paid the lion's share of educational expenses, including tuition, fees, supplies, and even stipends for living expenses. The G.I. Bill sparked a boom in higher education. Enrollments at accredited colleges, universities, and technical and professional schools spiked, rising from 1.5 million in 1940 to 3.6 million in 1960. The VA disbursed over \$14 billion in educational aid in just over a decade. Furthermore, the Bill encouraged home ownership. Roughly 40 percent of Americans owned homes in 1945, but that figure climbed to 60 percent a decade after the close of the war. Doing away with down-payment requirements, veterans could obtain home loans for as little as \$1 down. Close to 4 million veterans purchased homes through the G.I. Bill, sparking a construction bonanza that fueled postwar growth. In addition, the V.A. also

helped nearly 200,000 veterans secure farms and offered thousands more guaranteed financing for small businesses.

Not all Americans, however, benefited equally from the G.I. Bill. Indirectly, since the military limited the number of female personnel men qualified for the bill's benefits in far higher numbers. Colleges also limited the number of female applicants to guarantee space for male veterans. African Americans, too, faced discrimination. Segregation forced black veterans into overcrowded "historically black colleges" that had to turn away close to 20,000 applicants. Meanwhile, residential segregation limited black home ownership in various neighborhoods, denying black homeowners the equity and investment that would come in home ownership. There were other limits, and other disadvantaged groups. Veterans accused of homosexuality, for instance, were similarly unable to claim GI benefits.

The effects of the G.I. Bill were significant and long-lasting. It helped to sustain the great postwar economic boom and, if many could not attain it, it nevertheless established the hallmarks of American middle class life.

## XI. Conclusion

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited at the beginning of an unparalleled economic boom. The war had been won,

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the United States was stronger than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. And yet new problems loomed. Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons would disrupt post-war dreams of global harmony. Meanwhile, Americans that had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy eradicated around the world in reestablished colonial regimes and at home in segregation and injustice. The war had unleashed powerful forces, forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# TIMELINE

## World War II Timeline: 1935-1946

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1935-1937 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neutrality Acts</li> </ul>   |
| 1936      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Germans occupied the Rhineland.</li> <li>Italy conquered Ethiopia.</li> <li>The Spanish Civil War began.</li> </ul>  |
| 1937      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Japanese capture Nanjing, China.</li> </ul>  |
| 1938      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austria annexed by the Germans.</li> </ul>   |
| 1939      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Germany took Czechoslovakia.</li> <li>Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact signed.</li> <li>Germany attacked Poland, and World War II started.</li> </ul>  |
| 1940      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Germany conquered most of mainland, Western Europe, and British forces retreated to United Kingdom.</li> <li>The <b>Battle of Britain</b> led to the decimation of London and other cities in the UK. Prospects of a defeated United Kingdom generated war sympathy in the United States.</li> <li>The <b>Tripartite Pact</b> signed.</li> <li>The first peace-time draft in US history implemented.</li> <li>Roosevelt reelected for third term.</li> </ul> |
| 1941      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lend-Lease Act</b> established by US.</li> <li>Germany invaded the USSR.</li> <li><b>The Fair Employment Practices Committee</b> was created.</li> <li>Great Britain and United States signed the <b>Atlantic Charter</b>.</li> <li>On December 7th, the Japanese attacked <b>Pearl Harbor</b>, Hawaii, and the United States entered World War II.</li> </ul>  |
| 1942      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Japanese Internment</b> began.</li> <li><b>The Congress of Racial Equality</b> was founded.</li> <li>The <b>Manhattan Project</b> began.</li> <li>Militarily, Japan captured the US territory of the Philippines; the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway occurred, and US troops invaded North Africa.</li> </ul>  |

# TIMELINE

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|------|--|
| 1943 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coal miners' strike occurred.</li><li>• Race riot outbreaks in fifty US cities occurred.</li><li>• The Allies demanded unconditional surrender of Axis countries.</li><li>• US and British troops invaded Italy.</li></ul>   |
| 1944 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, France (D-Day)</b> started on June 6th.</li></ul>   |
| 1945 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>Yalta Conference</b> occurred (FDR, Stalin, Churchill).</li><li>• FDR died, and <b>Harry Truman</b> became president.</li><li>• <b>Potsdam Conference</b> occurred (Truman, Stalin, Attlee).</li><li>• May 7th Germany surrendered.</li><li>• The United States joined the United Nations.</li><li>• US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.</li><li>• August 15th Japan surrendered.</li></ul> |
| 1946 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• United Nations meets for first time.</li></ul>   |



# THE COLD WAR

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## The Cold War in Theme Analysis

The Cold War Era was when the United States exerted its world power status, by choice, to thwart the communist threat of the USSR. The efforts of the U.S. made it into the director & protector of the free world's policies; and other nations expected the U.S. to take this leadership role. The scope and scale of the U.S. industrial-military complex and the nation's role in WWII put the country in the position of a leading superpower (politically, economically, and militarily). Ultimately, the Soviet Union collapsed due to the inherent weaknesses of Soviet communism and imperialism, leaving the U.S. in the position of being "the" superpower in the world in the 1990s.

## Capitalism VS. Communism and the "Game of the Cold War" Explained

During the Cold War, the concepts of communism and capitalism (in this case ideally through democratic systems of government) were ideologically and practically in competition with each other. (Be able to identify both terms.) On the world scene the two major superpowers the U.S.S.R. (communist) and the U.S. (capitalist-democratic) demanded that countries align themselves with the communist world or the free world respectively. Some countries aligned with either of the superpowers for ideological reasons, but most did so for the geog-economic benefits

those alliances brought. Some countries, especially in the Middle East and Latin America, played the two superpowers off of each other in order to get the best "deal" for their national interests.

Whenever political-military disputes or disarray happened within or between countries around the globe, the two powers took an active interest in funding and backing their supporters or allies in those struggles (directly or indirectly). Through the resolution of those disputes, both powers hoped to advance their international ideological positions and economic ties. Since the world was divided into two basic spheres: the free world and the communist world, the competition between communism and capitalism occurred even in the most remote areas of the world.

Thus, the Cold War was a series of reactions by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to each others' international maneuvers. The escalation of tensions between the two powers also included the "arms race," the technological race for better weapons of mass-destruction. The belief that the Soviets had more powerful weapons drove the U.S. to have "one up" on the Soviets. This fact provided employment for many Americans in the arms industry and military, and it created the relative economic prosperity of the Cold War Era in the U.S. via the industrial-military complex.

In the Soviet Union, the situation was different. The state focused on military superiority and not on the basic economic production needed to feed and clothe

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its citizens. Without private enterprise to further advance the well-being of the Soviet people and with the basic repressive nature of the U.S.S.R., the Soviet economy faltered. Capitalistic and democratic reforms were embraced, which ultimately led to the downfall of the Soviet empire.

## Early Cold War Tensions

After World War Two, Americans suspicions and fears of the Soviets grew. Angry over the violations of the Yalta Agreement, President Truman went to the Potsdam Conference hoping to work with Stalin to obtain self-government for states in Europe under Soviet control. However, Truman left the meeting convinced that Stalin could not be negotiated with nor trusted, and he refused to hold any more meetings with Stalin or to “baby” the Soviets. The Soviet presence in Eastern Europe remained, and communism dominated the region for several generations.

## Containment

As a result of Soviet territorial aggressions after WWII & starting in Truman’s administration, the U.S. followed the philosophical tenants of containment as proposed by George F. Kennan. Containment was the policy of checking the expansion or influence of a hostile power (in this case the Soviets) via strategic alliances or by supporting weaker countries in areas of conflict. Since the U.S.S.R. by nature was an expansive state, Kennan believed that, if contained, it naturally would collapse under the weight of its own,

internally weak, totalitarian, repressive regime. (The U.S.S.R. used fear, repression, and resistance to a foreign enemy to keep control within its empire.) The primary diplomatic policy toward the U.S.S.R during all presidential administrations was containment. In fact, politically, the major parties agreed that relations with the U.S.S.R. needed to be taken seriously. In partisan rhetoric, both parties used the Soviet menace to create fear and blamed the other for not being tough on the communists.

## Overview: The Game of the Cold War-The Players

- Soviet Union
- United States and Western Europe
- Third World and China

## Strategies Used by the Players

- Soviets: Expansionism
- USA: Containment
- Third World/China: Survival and/or getting the best deal from either or both the USSR or USA.

## Strategies Used by Both Superpowers (USSR and USA)

- Direct military involvement (troops on the ground in direct combat or covert-military action) in third-world countries.

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- Indirect military involvement (supplying arms, munitions, and training) in third-world countries.
- Economic aid to governments or insurgent groups in third-world countries.
- Humanitarian aid to governments or via direct relief efforts in third-world countries.
- Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) or the Arms Race against each other.
- Propaganda inside and outside of their respective national borders. For the United States, this included the cultural propaganda of capitalism, e.g. rock and roll, coca-cola, etc. ...
- Espionage around the world.

## Cold War by Administration

### Truman (1949-1953)

Truman's Cold War focused on Europe, particularly the stabilization of post-World War II European nations internally to ward off the threat of communism from within. The US increased its military position and power by keeping bases in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, while the Soviets did the same. During WWII, Truman refused to "baby" the Soviets, while the Soviets complained about the "capitalist encirclement" around the USSR and of capitalism. Soviet rhetoric called for a world-wide proletarian, violent revolution. The USSR tightened controls over its Eastern European "sphere of influence" in countries

like: Poland, Rumania, Hungary by denying people their civil and political freedoms.

The US decided on the policy of containment, as mentioned elsewhere, and turned anti-Soviet views into a bipartisan issue. Both parties in the US saw the Soviets as a threat, and both argued that they were stronger than the other party in being tough on the Soviets. Regardless of which party held the presidency, the American public was educated and propagandized to regarding the Soviet threat.

The United Nations formed in 1945 to establish international cooperation, with the five biggest nations dominating on the Security Council. In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his famous "Iron Curtain" speech at a college in Fulton, Missouri. This term became used to identify the military, political, economic, and ideological barrier between the Soviet Bloc and Western Europe.

Some actions taken/events during the Truman Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- US pressuring the USSR to withdraw troops from Iran, after they refused to do so. The US became convinced the Soviets were aggressive and would only retreat when dealt with firmly.
- US provided \$400 million of aid to Greece and Turkey to help their governments end communist uprisings within their borders.

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- Truman Doctrine was issued in 1947 calling for active economic and military aid to nations threatened by communism, in order to stop it from spreading to other parts of the world.
- In June of 1947 the Marshall Plan was offered to Europe (including an offer to the USSR and its member states) in which the US would loan money to European nations to thwart an economic collapse. The program started in 1948, but the loans were contingent on the eradication of communism within a country's borders. Thus, the USSR declined the offer of the Marshall Plan. This sent a message to the Western World that the USSR was uncooperative, while the Marshall Plan itself led to American prosperity, as US goods and credit rebuilt Europe via aid going to sixteen nations. The US also strengthened West Germany through the plan.
- The Soviets responded with their own version, called the Molotov Plan, which was designed to strengthen the Soviet economic system. The Soviets also expelled non-communists from Hungary, formed the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) to lead all European communist parties, and led a communist coup in Czechoslovakia.
- In 1948, when the USSR blockaded West Berlin, the Western World responded with the Berlin Airlift by supporting the city with men, aircraft, and supplies. Flights entered Berlin almost every three minutes around the clock, and atomic bombers were ordered to Berlin (though unarmed). By May of 1949, the USSR lifted the blockade, but the USSR still retained control over East Berlin and East Germany.
- After the Berlin Blockade, European countries banded together in the first military alliance the US would formally enter since the Early Republic. In April of 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formed with the US funding about 80% of the organization and providing military aid and leadership. Other organizations like NATO followed, e.g. SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and the Organization of American States in Latin America.
- Other communist challenges arose globally with the fall of Nationalist China under Chiang Kai-shek to the communists under Mao Tse-Tung in 1949. The nationalist fled to the island of Taiwan and the US backed Taiwan, though it never formally recognized it as China.
- The US government formed the National Security Council (NSC) in 1947, which assisted presidents on conducting the Cold War. In particular the NSC wanted the US to develop the H-bomb (hydrogen bomb) and to expand the military budget accordingly. In Memorandum #68, they called for \$50 billion

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to be spent in order to lead a more aggressive campaign against global communism.

- The Korean War (Conflict) broke out in 1950 and lasted until 1953, when Soviet-backed North Korea (communist) invaded US-backed South Korea. The Korean War resulted in the NSC memorandum #68 being financially backed by Congress. Plans to rearm West Germany and Italy also were approved, while the US Military presence in Asia and the Pacific became permanent.
- In 1951, a treaty with Japan kept American forces at bases located in Japan.
- In 1951, ANZUS was formed between the US, Australia, and New Zealand promising military protection.
- At home, the Truman Administration embraced the Red Scare in politics, looking to scare Americans about an internal communist threat. The government sought to identify “fellow-travelers, pinkos, or reds” and in 1947 the Federal Employee Loyalty Program was established allowing firing on “reasonable grounds” for disbelieving an employee’s loyalty. All kinds of charges of un-American activities and attitudes were made. And in the late 1940s to the early 1950s, around three thousand federal employees resigned under duress, while around three hundred were dismissed. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Appleton, Wisconsin led the House Un-American

Activities Committee, which targeted all government workers and even questioned the president’s loyalties as this commission’s work took on a witch-hunt mentality. J. Edgar Hoover (FBI Director) also conducted background checks and told the public that one in about every 1,800 citizens was actually a communist sympathizer, creating a climate of distrust. In 1951 the McCarran International Security Act required communists to register with the government. The most sensational case of the era was the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were deemed part of a Soviet spy ring. The Soviet menace was within the borders of the US, though never to the degree propagandized at the time

## Eisenhower (1953-1961)

Eisenhower’s administration was dominated by the Korean War, which he sought to end due to his philosophy that the US should not engage in military actions without winnable aims. John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State told the Koreans that if they did not negotiate a peace atomic weapons would be used. It worked, and a peace was settled in July of 1953. Thus, “atomic diplomacy” the philosophy that atomic weapons and air power threats in lieu of ground troop invasions should be used in dealing with other nations (It also was deemed as a way to reduce the costs of the conventional military). This all was part of Eisenhower’s and Dulles’ “New Look” foreign policy in which they called for massive retaliation against



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the Soviets and actively entered mutual defense pacts with nations around the world. While the US was solidifying relationships globally, the Soviets also were advancing their interests via the Warsaw Pact in 1955, which was their version of NATO.

Particular actions taken/events during the Eisenhower Era in the Game of the Cold War included

- The United Nations created a Jewish homeland out of Palestine, creating an Arab and Jewish state (Israel) in May 1947. The US recognized Israel as a country that same month. This action led to negative reactions from Arab nations.
- Aswan Dam, Egypt - Eisenhower wanted to work with Egyptian president Gamal Nasser by providing monies for the building of the Aswan Dam. The US put conditions on the loan. It expected Egypt to form an alliance with Great Britain and to recognize Israeli authority in an Egyptian-Israeli treaty. Egypt declined and turned to the USSR for financial assistance.
- Suez Canal Crisis (1955) – When the Suez Canal was taken out of British and French control, the nations invaded the region to maintain control. The Soviets came to the defense of Egypt and Iran, and the US called upon the UN to end the British-French armed intervention. This move stopped the canal from falling fully into anti-western, pro-Soviet hands.
- Problems with Iran led to the Eisenhower Doctrine which called for two-hundred million dollars of economic and military aid to help defend Middle Eastern nations from communist and arab-nationalist rebellions and threats. The US used the CIA to dispose of an anti-US Iranian leader and replace him with the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who then aligned with the US in 1956. The US took similar measures in Jordan and Lebanon in the late 1950s.
- In 1959, Fidel Castro rose to power by overthrowing the corrupt government of Fulgencio Batista and then signed a pact with the USSR in 1960. Soon after the CIA developed a plan to overthrow Castro in order to end a communist threat ninety miles south of the US.
- In Asia in 1954, the French in Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) lost at the battle of Dienbienphu to communists led by Ho Chi Minh. This led to western nations stepping in to partition the area and create the initially neutral states of Cambodia and Laos, the pro-western South Vietnam (under Ngo Dinh Diem), and the communist North Vietnam (led by Ho Chi Minh). The loss of French colonial control of Indochina scared the western world, and Eisenhower like others believed in what became known as the Domino Theory, which argued that if one nation in the region fell to communism others would topple like domi-

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nos until Australia and New Zealand (western allies) were threatened.

- In 1953, Stalin died and was replaced by Georgii Malenkov who called for a “peaceful coexistence” and showed an interest in disarmament negotiations. Malenkov didn’t last, though and he was replaced by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956. Eisenhower and Khrushchev entered into the Open Skies Program, in which both countries shared information on military locations and allowed air reconnaissance over each other’s air space (they agreed to allow each other to spy on each other). That said, both countries were investigating aircraft that could fly undetected by radar and allow for surreptitious activities, leading in the US to the creation of the U2 spy plane. In May of 1960, the Soviets shot down one of these U2 spy planes and captured the pilot, Gary Powers. After this incident the Cold War got even colder.
- In 1956, the Soviets put down a pro-democratic revolution in Hungary, which soured US-Soviet relations regarding Eastern Europe. The Soviets also sought to sign a treaty with East Germany to remove the western presence from East German. Under US threat of force, the USSR backed down.
- In 1959, the Soviets and the US met to end nuclear testing, establish controls, and halt testing for three years.

- One of the key warnings to the American public offered during this time, with lasting implications for the world, was by Eisenhower himself who warned the nation of the dangers of a Military-Industrial Complex.

*Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations. This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence -- economic, political, and even spiritual -- is felt in every city, every State house, and every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.*

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*We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.*

Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960, p. 1035- 1040

## Kennedy (1961-1963)

Kennedy entered office on a platform that was highly critical of the Republicans as having gone “soft” on the communists. He preached a tougher approach toward the USSR. Kennedy, though, was not received as an equal by Khrushchev, who viewed him as an inexperienced kid and was able to intimidate him with threats of a Soviet occupation of West Berlin. Kennedy was not a strong president diplomatically, but his administration managed the nation through a time when tensions between the US and USSR were at their most tense.

Some actions taken/events during the Kennedy Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- Kennedy’s administration separated the military budget from certain tax constraints, allowing for the increase of arms development.
- The US created and funded the Apollo Program, with the goal of getting to the moon within the decade, in reaction to the late 1950s Soviet launches of communication satellites

Sputnik I and II and the Soviet’s putting the first human in space, Yuri Gagarin.

- The Green Berets were trained to stop insurgents in “third-world” countries.
- The Peace Corps was formed in 1961 as a Cold War tactic to put a friendly face on America in third-world countries through direct health, educational, and technological aid by US volunteers.
- The poorly planned, CIA-led Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba on April 17th, 1961 failed to overthrow Castro’s regime and worsened US-Cuban/Soviet relations.
- In 1961, the USSR built the Berlin Wall to stop East Berlin residents from fleeing to freedom. In June of 1963, Kennedy went to the wall and delivered his famous Ich bin ein Berliner speech.
- Cuban Missile Crisis – For thirteen days in the fall of 1962 after a US U2 spy plane discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba, a standoff that included a US-blockade of Cuba occurred. War and possible nuclear strikes appeared imminent on October 24th, when two Soviet freight ships approached the blockade. Intensive negotiations led to an agreement in which the US promised to remove missiles from Turkey and not to invade Cuba again, while the Soviets agreed to remove missiles from Cuba. After this event the USSR and USA estab-

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lished the “hot line” or “red phone” as a line between Washington DC and Moscow that allowed for direct communication in times of crisis. It also led to the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty in which atmospheric, space, and sea testing of nuclear weapons were banned; 100 nations signed, with notable exceptions being France and China.

- Vietnam escalated during Kennedy’s administration. In 1963, the CIA killed South Vietnamese president, Diem, and replaced him with a new president. The US also sent millions of military aid (\$185 million) along with advisors (16,000).

## Johnson (1963-1969)

Johnson became president due to the assassination of Kennedy. A long-time experienced politician, one of Johnson’s weaknesses was with foreign policy. He tended to be reductionist in his approach to global affairs. The Johnson Era of the Cold War turned hot by the dominance of the Vietnam War during his tenure as president, along with Latin-American relations.

Some actions taken/events during the Johnson Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- The Mann Doctrine told Latin American countries that regardless of their internal domestic politics the US would send aid and help with the direct suppression of communist uprisings

within their borders, e.g. in the Dominican Republic.

- By 1964, the South Vietnamese were on the verge of collapsing to the Viet Cong (pro-North Vietnamese rebels within South Vietnam). Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, along with the NSC and others encouraged the use of airpower to strike at North Vietnamese targets, escalating the US role in the war. In August of 1964, the North Vietnamese attacked American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, leading to the similarly named resolution, which gave the president the power to take all actions necessary to stop attacks on US forces in Vietnam. This started in March of 1965, when Johnson decided to bomb both North Vietnam and supply routes to the South. The war escalated and troop numbers were increased to over 500,000. In January of 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive targeting South Vietnamese cities, costing a lot of lives and resulting in a turn of more average Americans against the war.

## Nixon (1969-1974)

During the height of the anti-war movement, Nixon won the presidency in 1968 by indicating that he wanted an honorable peace in Vietnam while advancing US leadership globally. By this time, the cost of maintaining a totalitarian state with a state-con-

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trolled economy had started to weaken the USSR's economic (especially domestic) capabilities, while China, though still communist politically, started to shift toward a market-based economy. The US would capitalize on both of these dynamics to advance its position during the Cold War.

Some actions taken/events during the Nixon Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- Henry Kissinger became National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State. He wanted the US to maintain its position through both strength and flexibility, particularly in attempting to facilitate a Soviet-Chinese split. In particular, Kissinger encouraged the practice of decreasing tensions between the superpowers via cultural, diplomatic, and commercial exchanges. This formally was known as *de'tente*. And, the US used this to play the China Card against the USSR, by opening up relations with China, including a visit by Nixon to the Great Wall and a drop in trade restrictions. Suddenly, China was not quite so much the enemy. This put pressure on the USSR to open up to US negotiations. Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev also met with Nixon in 1972 in Moscow where they signed SALT I, the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement, to reduce armaments and also agreed to increase trade with the US in attempt to help develop the faltering Soviet, domestic economy.
- Vietnamization was implemented in 1969 in order to decrease US troops in Vietnam, stressing that, though the US would continue to support South Vietnam in their fight against the communists, South Vietnamese troops would have to play a greater role in their country's own defense. By 1970, US troops had declined by over 100,000.
- The Nixon Doctrine established that countries threatened by communism would be supported by the US but that the military burden primarily was to be their own.
- The Pentagon Papers came out in 1971 revealing that the US had been deceiving the American public about the full extent of US involvement in Vietnam since the 1950s.
- Nixon argued that in order to end the war more quickly it was necessary to send 80,000 more troops into Cambodia to attack North Vietnamese supply lines. This announcement led to anti-war uprisings across the US. The Senate repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.
- In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which set a sixty-day limit on the president's ability to commit US troops to hostile combat. Congressional approval was needed for continued action.
- A peace settlement came in 1973, after a massive bombing campaign by the US, that



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brought on a cease fire and the withdraw of US troops, but also allowed the North Vietnamese to stay, eventually in 1975 South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam, and the US and other nations took in South Vietnamese refugees who fled during the takeover

- In Latin America, the CIA overthrew the communist government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Trade restrictions with Cuba remained in place.

## Ford (1974-1977)

Ford was the only president never elected into to office; he was appointed to the vice-presidency, and became president after Nixon resigned. He initially continued most of Nixon's foreign policy and retained Kissinger who met with Brezhnev a few more times, but Ford was a product of the Civil Rights era, and when Brezhnev refused to respect human rights, Ford turned away from détente. One of the key foreign relations events of Ford's administration was when Kissinger negotiated an end to the Arab-Israeli War and improved relations between Israel and Egypt. Arab states, though formed OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and embargoed the sale of the US and other western countries resulting in what became known as the energy crisis.

## Carter (1977-1981)

In the bicentennial election of 1976, Carter defeated Ford. Carter also tried to bring human-rights principles into US foreign policy. He felt that Americans

had too long been irrationally fearful of communism and that foreign policy should use economic and social development to fight poverty as a cause of civil and international unrest around the world. Carter's personal focus for the Cold War was on developing nations, despite the differing views of some strong anti-USSR members of his cabinet.

Some actions taken/events during the Carter Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- The US signed a treaty with Panama that would return control of the Panama Canal to them in 1999.
- In Nicaragua in 1979, the Sandinista-Liberation Front under Daniel Ortega took over and aligned with the USSR, despite receiving US aid.
- In March of 1979, Carter helped negotiate the first major treaty between an Arab state and Israel in the Camp David Accords between Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Egypt recognized Israel's right to exist, while Israel recognized Egypt's claim to the Sinai Peninsula. The treaty did not sustain peace in the region due to the rejection by other Arab nations of Egypt from the Arab league and the Palestine Liberation Organization's political and terrorist actions in the region
- Relations with the Soviets soured the more liberal foreign policy of Carter after the So-

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viets invaded Afghanistan, where the US had armed, trained, and backed anti-Soviet rebels, particularly the mujahideen forces led by men such as Osama bin Laden, who later led the 9-11 attacks against the United States in 2001. In response to the invasion the US withdrew from SALT II talks, ended grain shipments to the USSR, and boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Additionally, Carter issued the Carter Doctrine, which said that any nation that tried to control the Persian Gulf would be met with all means necessary

- The Iranian Revolution in 1978 saw Islamic fundamentalists led by the Ruhollah Khomeini overthrow the Shah of Iran and take over the US embassy. The Hostage Crisis resulted, and after 444 days in 1981 the hostages were released as a result of Canadian and Algerian intervention and diplomatic efforts.

## Reagan (1981-1989)

From the mid-20th century, Ronald Reagan had been staunchly anti-communist, and the failures at the end of Carter's administration led him to call for a renewed military presence in the world to combat the "Evil Empire."

Some actions taken/events during the Reagan Era in the Game of the Cold War included.

- Congressional funding of over \$100 billion a year for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or "Star Wars," as it was popularly called.
- The US invaded Grenada in 1983 to restore a pro-US regime.
- The Boland Amendment passed Congress in 1984, prohibiting money to the CIA for aiding the Contras rebels in anti-US Nicaragua.
- During Reagan's first administration there was no attempt to improve relations with the Soviets. The goal became to outspend the Soviets into the collapse of their empire. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader. Gorbachev was a reform-minded Soviet, who implemented perestroika, which allowed for capitalism to enter the Soviet Union, and glasnost, which allowed citizens to engage in the expression of free thought. Gorbachev and Reagan met in 1985 in Geneva, Switzerland a summit and came to like each other and advances in US-Soviet relations occurred. Eventually the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty was signed calling for an end to medium-range nuclear weapons and inspections.

## Bush Sr. (1989-1993)

Bush is only a Cold War president by default, the Soviet economic decline, changes brought on by Gorbachev to open communist Russia to capitalism and free thought, and arms-race spending pressure tactics against the USSR by Reagan created conditions ripe for the decline of the Soviet empire. As the Soviets allowed for reforms, the satellite states created at the end of World War Two under the "Soviet Sphere of

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Influence” rebelled for independence and the Soviets withdrew. The end of the Cold War happened so quickly that within a span of five years the world had changed. In 1988 Poland became free. In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down along with the communist governments in East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania. In 1990, East and West Germany reunited, and the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania gained their independence, while civil wars erupted in places like Yugoslavia and Bosnia. In 1992, The Commonwealth of Independent States formed under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin the head of the new Russian Republic. The Cold war was over, and the world had to readjust to a new paradigm with the United States of America as the dominant power on the planet.

## Cold War Culture

During the Cold War, the people of the free world understood Soviet communism as a dangerous force on the planet. In the U.S. the nasty “C-Word” was communism. People embraced the Red Scare from the 1920s onward, and during the 1950s the Red Menace of communism loomed over America. From politics to popular culture, communism and communists were feared. The dynamics of U.S.-Soviet relations were a part of all levels of American society. Do a Google search to find all kinds of evidence of this in popular culture, e.g. movies, TV, books. In the U.S.S.R. the threat of capitalism (the Soviet’s nasty “C-Word”) was just as dangerous. The Soviets felt the western

powers were trying to surround them in a “capitalist encirclement.” On their home fronts, governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain effectively used fear-based propaganda on the public. The Cold War was also part of consumerism, art, literature, music, television, & movies.

Note: Read the main chapter about the Cold War in your textbook. Then you will need to pick through the remaining chapters of the text to gather full-story of the Cold War. Don’t worry on mastering all of the details of the Cold War; it simply is too large of a topic. Focus instead on finding key, representative examples of how the “Game of the Cold War,” as mentioned above, was played by the US, USSR, & Third World in different eras of the globe from 1945 to 1991. As you read, keep a keen eye on the Middle East during the Cold War, due to its “Why History?” impact on life today.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

# THE AMERICAN YAWP

## THE COLD WAR



*Test of the tactical nuclear weapon “Small Boy” at the Nevada Test Site, July 14, 1962. [National Nuclear Security Administration, #760-5-NTS](#).*

## I. Introduction

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union—erstwhile allies in the Second World War—sour­ed quickly in the early months of the postwar peace. On February 22, frustrated that the Truman Administration still officially sought U.S.-Soviet co­operation, the Charge d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, George Kennan, sent a famously lengthy telegram—literally referred to as the “Long Telegram”—to the State Department denouncing the Soviet Union. “World communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue,” he wrote, and “the steady advance of uneasy Russian nationalism ... in [the] new guise of international Marx-

ism ... is more dangerous and insidious than ever before.” There could be no cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, Kennan wrote. Instead, the Soviets had to be “contained.” Less than two weeks later, on March 5, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited President Harry Truman in his home state of Missouri and declared that Europe had been cut in half, divided by an “iron curtain” that had “descended across the Continent.” Aggressively anti-Soviet sentiment seized the American government and soon the American people.

The Cold War was a global political and ideological struggle between capitalist and communist countries, particularly between the two surviving superpowers

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of the postwar world: the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). “Cold” because it was never a “hot,” direct shooting war between the United States and the Soviet Union, the generations-long, multifaceted rivalry nevertheless bent the world to its whims. Tensions ran highest, perhaps, during the “first Cold War,” which lasted from the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, after which followed a period of relaxed tensions and increased communication and cooperation, known by the French term *détente*, until the “second Cold War” interceded from roughly 1979 until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Cold War reshaped the world, and in so doing forever altered American life and the generations of Americans that lived within its shadow.

## II. Political, Economic, and Military Dimensions

The Cold War grew out of a failure to achieve a durable settlement among leaders from the “Big Three” Allies—the US, Britain, and the Soviet Union—as they met at Yalta in Russian Crimea and at Potsdam in occupied Germany to shape the postwar order. The Germans had pillaged their way across Eastern Europe and the Soviets had pillaged their way back across it at the cost of millions of lives. Stalin considered the newly conquered territory part of a Soviet “sphere of influence.” With Germany’s defeat imminent, the Allies set terms for unconditional surrender, while deliberating over reparations, tribunals, and

the nature of an occupation regime that would initially be divided into American, British, French, and Soviet zones. Even as plans were made to end the fighting in the Pacific, and it was determined that the Soviets would declare war on Japan within ninety days of Germany’s surrender, suspicion and mistrust were already mounting. The political landscape was altered drastically by Franklin Roosevelt’s sudden death in April 1945, just days before the inaugural meeting of the United Nations (UN). Although Roosevelt was skeptical of Stalin, he always held out hope that the Soviets could be brought into the “Free World.” Truman, like Churchill, had no such illusions. He committed the United States to a hard-line, anti-Soviet approach.

At the Potsdam Conference, held on the outskirts of Berlin from mid-July to early August, the allies debated the fate of Soviet-occupied Poland. Toward the end of the meeting, the American delegation received word that Manhattan Project scientists had successfully tested an atomic bomb. On July 24, when Truman told Stalin about this “new weapon of unusual destructive force,” the Soviet leader simply nodded his acknowledgement and said that he hoped the Americans would make “good use” of it.

The Cold War had long roots. An alliance of convenience during World War II to bring down Hitler’s Germany was not enough to erase decades of mutual suspicions. The Bolshevik Revolution had overthrown the Russian Tsarists during World War I.



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Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin urged an immediate worldwide peace that would pave the way for world socialism just as Woodrow Wilson brought the United States into the war with promises of global democracy and free trade. The United States had intervened militarily against the Red Army during the Russian civil war, and when the Soviet Union was founded in 1922 the United States refused to recognize it. The two powers were brought together only by their common enemy, and, without that common enemy, there was little hope for cooperation.

On the eve of American involvement in World War II, on August 14, 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill had issued a joint declaration of goals for postwar peace, known as the Atlantic Charter. An adaptation of Wilson's Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter established the creation of the United Nations. The Soviet Union was among the fifty charter UN member-states and was given one of five seats—alongside the US, Britain, France, and China—on the select Security Council. The Atlantic Charter, though, also set in motion the planning for a reorganized global economy. The July 1944 United Nations Financial and Monetary Conference, more popularly known as the Bretton Woods Conference, created the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the forerunner of the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The “Bretton Woods system” was bolstered in 1947 with the addition of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), forerunner of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Soviets rejected it all.

Many officials on both sides knew that the Soviet-American relationship would dissolve into renewed hostility upon the closing of the war, and events proved them right. In a 1947 article for *Foreign Affairs*—written under the pseudonym “Mr. X”—George Kennan warned that Americans should “continue to regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner,” since Stalin harbored “no real faith in the possibility of a permanent happy coexistence of the Socialist and capitalist worlds.” He urged US leaders to pursue “a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians.”

Truman, on March 12, 1947, announced \$400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey, where “terrorist activities...led by Communists” jeopardized “democratic” governance. With Britain “reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece,” it fell on the US, Truman said, “to support free peoples...resisting attempted subjugation by...outside pressures.” The so-called “Truman Doctrine” became a cornerstone of the American policy of containment.

In the harsh winter of 1946-47, famine loomed in much of continental Europe. Blizzards and freezing cold halted coal production. Factories closed. Unemployment spiked. Amid these conditions, the Communist parties of France and Italy gained nearly a third of the seats in their respective Parliaments. American officials worried that Europe's impoverished masses were increasingly vulnerable

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to Soviet propaganda. The situation remained dire through the spring, when Secretary of State General George Marshall gave an address at Harvard University, on June 5, 1947, suggesting that “the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace.” Although Marshall had stipulated to potential critics that his proposal was “not directed against any country, but against hunger, poverty...and chaos,” Stalin clearly understood the development of the ERP as an assault against Communism in Europe: he saw it as a “Trojan Horse” designed to lure Germany and other countries into the capitalist web.

The European Recovery Program (ERP), popularly known as the Marshall Plan, pumped enormous sums into Western Europe. From 1948-1952 the US invested \$13 billion toward reconstruction while simultaneously loosening trade barriers. To avoid the postwar chaos of World War I, the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild Western Europe, open markets, and win European support for capitalist democracies. The Soviets countered with their rival Molotov Plan, a symbolic pledge of aid to Eastern Europe. Polish leader Józef Cyrankiewicz was rewarded with a five-year, \$450 million dollar trade agreement from Russia for boycotting the Marshall Plan. Stalin was jealous of Eastern Europe. When Czechoslovakia received \$200 million of American assistance, Stalin summoned Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk to



*The Berlin Blockade and resultant Allied airlift was one of the first major crises of the Cold War. Photograph, U.S. Navy Douglas R4D and U.S. Air Force C-47 aircraft unload at Tempelhof Airport during the Berlin Airlift, c. 1948-1949. Wikimedia. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C-47s\\_at\\_Tempelhof\\_Airport\\_Berlin\\_1948.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C-47s_at_Tempelhof_Airport_Berlin_1948.jpg).*

Moscow. Masaryk later recounted that he “went to Moscow as the foreign minister of an independent sovereign state,” but “returned as a lackey of the Soviet Government.” Stalin exercised ever tighter control over Soviet “satellite” countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The situation in Germany meanwhile deteriorated. Berlin had been divided into communist and capitalist zones. In June 1948, when the US, British, and French officials introduced a new currency, the Soviet Union initiated a ground blockade, cutting off rail and road access to West Berlin (landlocked within the Soviet occupation zone) to gain control over the entire city. The United States organized and coordinated a massive airlift that flew essential supplies into the beleaguered city for eleven months, until the Soviets

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lifted the blockade on May 12, 1949. Germany was officially broken in half. On May 23, the western half of the country was formally renamed the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) later that fall. Berlin, which lay squarely within the GDR, was divided into two sections (and, from August 1961 until November 1989, famously separated by physical walls).

In the summer of 1949, American officials launched the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), a mutual defense pact in which the US and Canada were joined by England, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. The Soviet Union would formalize its own collective defensive agreement in 1955, the Warsaw Pact, which included Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany.

Liberal journalist Walter Lippmann was largely responsible for popularizing the term “the Cold War” in his book, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*, published in 1947. Lippmann envisioned a prolonged stalemate between the US and the USSR, a war of words and ideas in which direct shots would not necessarily be fired between the two. Lippmann agreed that the Soviet Union would only be “prevented from expanding” if it were “confronted with...American power,” but he felt “that the strategical conception and plan” recommended by Mr. X (George Kennan) was “fundamentally unsound,” as

it would require having “the money and the military power always available in sufficient amounts to apply ‘counter-force’ at constantly shifting points all over the world.” Lippmann cautioned against making far-flung, open-ended commitments, favoring instead a more limited engagement that focused on halting the influence of communism in the “heart” of Europe; he believed that if the Soviet system were successfully restrained on the continent, it could otherwise be left alone to collapse under the weight of its own imperfections.

A new chapter in the Cold War began on October 1, 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Tse-tung declared victory against “Kuomintang” Nationalists led by the Western-backed Chiang Kai-shek. The Kuomintang retreated to the island of Taiwan and the CCP took over the mainland under the red flag of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Coming so soon after the Soviet Union’s successful test of an atomic bomb, on August 29, the “loss of China,” the world’s most populous country, contributed to a sense of panic among American foreign policymakers, whose attention began to shift from Europe to Asia. After Dean Acheson became Secretary of State in 1949, Kennan was replaced in the State Department by former investment banker Paul Nitze, whose first task was to help compose, as Acheson later described in his memoir, a document designed to “bludgeon the mass mind of ‘top government’” into approving a “substantial increase” in military expenditures.

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“National Security Memorandum 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” a national defense memo known as “NSC-68,” achieved its goal. Issued in April 1950, the nearly sixty-page classified memo warned of “increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction,” which served to remind “every individual” of “the ever-present possibility of annihilation.” It said that leaders of the USSR and its “international communist movement” sought only “to retain and solidify their absolute power.” As the central “bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion,” America had become “the principal enemy” that “must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another.” NSC-68 urged a “rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength” in order to “roll back the Kremlin’s drive for world domination.” Such a massive commitment of resources, amounting to more than a threefold increase in the annual defense budget, was necessary because the USSR, “unlike previous aspirants to hegemony,” was “animated by a new fanatic faith,” seeking “to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world.” Both Kennan and Lippmann were among a minority in the foreign policy establishment who argued to no avail that such a “militarization of containment” was tragically wrongheaded.

On June 25, 1950, as US officials were considering the merits of NSC 68’s proposals, including “the intensification of ... operations by covert means in the fields of economic ... political and psychological



*The communist world system rested, in part, on the relationship between the two largest communist nations — the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. This 1950 Chinese Stamp depicts Joseph Stalin shaking hands with Mao Zedong. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_stamp_in_1950.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese\\_stamp\\_in\\_1950.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_stamp_in_1950.jpg).*

warfare” designed to foment “unrest and revolt in ... [Soviet] satellite countries,” fighting erupted in Korea between communists in the north and American-backed anti-communists in the south.

After Japan surrendered in September 1945, a US-Soviet joint occupation had paved the way for the division of Korea. In November 1947, the UN passed a resolution that a united government in Korea should be created but the Soviet Union refused to cooperate. Only the south held elections. The Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea, was created three months after the election. A month later, communists in the north established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Both claimed to stand for a unified Korean peninsula. The UN recognized the ROK, but incessant armed conflict broke out between North and South.

In the spring of 1950, Stalin hesitantly endorsed North Korean leader Kim Il Sung’s plan to ‘liberate’



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the South by force, a plan heavily influenced by Mao's recent victory in China. While he did not desire a military confrontation with the US, Stalin thought correctly that he could encourage his Chinese comrades to support North Korea if the war turned against the DPRK. The North Koreans launched a successful surprise attack and Seoul, the capital of South Korea, fell to the communists on June 28. The UN passed resolutions demanding that North Korea cease hostilities and withdraw its armed forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and calling on member states to provide the ROK military assistance to repulse the Northern attack.

That July, UN forces mobilized under American General Douglass MacArthur. Troops landed at Inchon, a port city around 30 miles away from Seoul, and took the city on September 28. They moved on North Korea. On October 1, ROK/UN forces crossed the 38th parallel, and on October 26 they reached the Yalu River, the traditional Korea-China border. They were met by 300,000 Chinese troops who broke the advance and rolled up the offensive. On November 30, ROK/UN forces began a fevered retreat. They returned across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and abandoned Seoul on January 4, 1951. The United Nations forces regrouped, but the war entered into a stalemate. General MacArthur, growing impatient and wanting to eliminate the communist threats, requested authorization to use nuclear weapons against North Korea and China. Denied, MacArthur publicly denounced Truman. Truman, unwilling to threaten



*With the policy of “containing” communism and at home and abroad, the U.S. pressured the United Nations to support the South Koreans, ultimately supplying American troops to fight in the civil war. Though rather forgotten in the annals of American history, the Korean War caused over 30,000 American deaths and 100,000 wounded, leaving an indelible mark on those who served.*  
[Wikimedia](#).

World War III and refusing to tolerate MacArthur's public insubordination, dismissed the General in April. On June 23, 1951, the Soviet ambassador to the UN suggested a cease-fire, which the US immediately accepted. Peace talks continued for two years.

General Dwight Eisenhower defeated Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson in the 1952 presidential election and Stalin died in March 1953. The DPRK warmed to peace, and an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. Upwards of 1.5 million people had died during the conflict.

Coming so soon after World War II and ending without clear victory, Korea became for many Americans a “forgotten war.” Decades later, though, the nation's other major intervention in Asia would



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be anything but forgotten. The Vietnam War had deep roots in the Cold War world. Vietnam had been colonized by France and seized by Japan during World War II. The nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh had been backed by the US during his anti-Japanese insurgency and, following Japan's surrender in 1945, "Viet Minh" nationalists, quoting Thomas Jefferson, declared an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Yet France moved to reassert authority over its former colony in Indochina, and the United States sacrificed Vietnamese self-determination for France's colonial imperatives. Ho Chi Minh turned to the Soviet Union for assistance in waging war against the French colonizers in a protracted war.

After French troops were defeated at the 'Battle of Dien Bien Phu' in May 1954, US officials helped broker a temporary settlement that partitioned Vietnam in two, with a Soviet/Chinese-backed state in the north and an American-backed state in the south. To stifle communist expansion southward, the United States would send arms, offer military advisors, prop up corrupt politicians, stop elections, and, eventually, send over 500,000 troops, of whom nearly 60,000 would be lost before the communists finally reunified the country.

### III. The Arms Build Up, The Space Race, and Technological Advancement

The world was never the same after the United States leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 with nuclear bombs. Not only had perhaps 180,000 civilians been killed, the nature of warfare was forever changed. The Soviets accelerated their nuclear research, expedited in no small part by spies such as Klaus Fuchs, who had stolen nuclear secrets from the American's secret Manhattan Project. Soviet scientists successfully tested an atomic bomb on August 29, 1949, years before American officials had estimated they would. This unexpectedly quick Russian success not only caught the United States off guard, caused tensions across the Western world, and propelled a nuclear "arms race" between the US and the USSR.

The United States detonated the first thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb (using fusion explosives of theoretically limitless power) on November 1, 1952. The blast measured over 10 megatons and generated an inferno five miles wide with a mushroom cloud 25 miles high and 100 miles across. The irradiated debris—fallout—from the blast circled the Earth, occasioning international alarm about the effects of nuclear testing on human

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health and the environment. It only hastened the arms race, with each side developing increasingly advanced warheads and delivery systems. The USSR successfully tested a hydrogen bomb in 1953, and soon thereafter Eisenhower announced a policy of “massive retaliation.” The US would henceforth respond to threats or acts of aggression with perhaps its entire nuclear might. Both sides, then, would theoretically be deterred from starting a war, through the logic of “mutually-assured destruction,” (MAD). Oppenheimer likened the state of “nuclear deterrence” between the US and the USSR to “two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other,” but only by risking their own lives.

Fears of nuclear war produced a veritable atomic culture. Films such as *Godzilla*, *On the Beach*, *Fail-Safe*, and *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* plumbed the depths of American anxieties with plots featuring radioactive monsters, nuclear accidents, and doomsday scenarios. Anti-nuclear protests in the United States and abroad warned against the perils of nuclear testing and highlighted the likelihood that a thermonuclear war would unleash a global environmental catastrophe. Yet at the same time, peaceful nuclear technologies, such as fission and fusion-based energy, seemed to herald a utopia of power that would be clean, safe, and “too cheap to meter.” In 1953, Eisenhower proclaimed at the UN that the US would share the knowledge and means for other countries to use atomic power. Henceforth, “the miraculous



*In response to the Soviet Union's test of a pseudo-hydrogen bomb in 1953, the United States began Castle Bravo — the first U.S. test of a dry fuel, hydrogen bomb. Detonated on March 1, 1954, it was the most powerful nuclear device ever tested by the U.S. But the effects were more gruesome than expected, causing nuclear fall-out and radiation poisoning in nearby Pacific islands. Photograph, March 1, 1945. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle_Bravo_Blast.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle\\_Bravo\\_Blast.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle_Bravo_Blast.jpg).*

inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life.” The ‘Atoms for Peace’ speech brought about the establishment of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), along with worldwide investment in this new economic sector.

As Germany fell at the close of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union each sought to acquire elements of the Nazi’s V-2 superweapon program. A devastating rocket that had terrorized England, the V-2 was capable of delivering its explosive payload up to a distance of nearly 600 miles, and both nations sought to capture the scientists, designs, and manufacturing equipment to make it work. A former top German rocket scientist, Wernher Von Braun, became the leader of

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the American space program; the Soviet Union's program was secretly managed by former prisoner Sergei Korolev. After the end of the war, American and Soviet rocket engineering teams worked to adapt German technology in order to create an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The Soviets achieved success first. They even used the same launch vehicle on October 4, 1957, to send Sputnik 1, the world's first human-made satellite, into orbit. It was a decisive Soviet propaganda victory.

In response, the US government rushed to perfect its own ICBM technology and launch its own satellites and astronauts into space. In 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created as a successor to the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). Initial American attempts to launch a satellite into orbit using the Vanguard rocket suffered spectacular failures, heightening fears of Soviet domination in space. While the American space program floundered, on September 13, 1959, the Soviet Union's "Luna 2" capsule became the first human-made object to touch the moon. The "race for survival," as it was called by the *New York Times*, reached a new level. The Soviet Union successfully launched a pair of dogs (Belka and Strelka) into orbit and returned them to Earth while the American Mercury program languished behind schedule. Despite countless failures and one massive accident that killed nearly one hundred Soviet military and rocket engineers, Russian 'cosmonaut' Yuri Gagarin was launched into orbit on



*Joseph McCarthy, Republican Senator from Wisconsin, fueled fears during the early 1950s that communism was rampant and growing. This intensified Cold War tensions felt by every segment of society, from government officials to ordinary American citizens. Photograph of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, March 14, 1950. National Archives and Records Administration.*

April 12, 1961. Astronaut Alan Shepard accomplished a sub-orbital flight in the Freedom 7 capsule on May 5. John Kennedy would use America's losses in the "space race" to bolster funding for a moon landing.

While outer space captivated the world's imagination, the Cold War still captured its anxieties. The ever-escalating arms race continued to foster panic. In the early 1950s, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FDCA) began preparing citizens for the worst. Schoolchildren were instructed, via a film featuring Bert the Turtle, to "duck and cover" beneath their desks in the event of a thermonuclear war.

Although it took a back seat to space travel and nuclear weapons, the advent of modern computing was yet another major Cold War scientific innovation,

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the effects of which were only just beginning to be understood. In 1958, following the humiliation of the Sputnik launches, Eisenhower authorized the creation of an Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) housed within the Department of Defense (later changed to DARPA). As a secretive military research and development operation, ARPA was tasked with funding and otherwise overseeing the production of sensitive new technologies. Soon, in cooperation with university-based computer engineers, ARPA would develop the world's first system of "network packing switches" and computer networks would begin connecting to one another.

### IV. The Cold War Red Scare, McCarthyism, and Liberal Anti-Communism

Joseph McCarthy burst onto the national scene during a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950. Waving a sheet of paper in the air, he proclaimed: "I have here in my hand a list of 205... names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping [US] policy." Since the Wisconsin Republican had no actual list, when pressed, the number changed to fifty-seven, then, later, eighty-one. Finally he promised to disclose the name of just one communist, the nation's "top Soviet agent." The shifting numbers brought ridicule, but it didn't matter, not really: McCarthy's claims won him fame and fueled the ongoing "red scare."



*The environment of fear and panic instigated by McCarthyism led to the arrest of many innocent people. Still, some Americans accused of supplying top-secret information to the Soviets were in fact spies. The Rosenbergs were convicted of espionage and executed in 1953 for giving information about the atomic bomb to the Soviets. This was one case that has proven the test of time, for as recently as 2008 a co-conspirator of the Rosenbergs admitted to spying for the Soviet Union. Roger Higgins, "[Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, separated by heavy wire screen as they leave U.S. Court House after being found guilty by jury]," 1951. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97503499/>.*

Within a ten-month span beginning in 1949, the USSR developed a nuclear bomb, China fell to Communism, and over 300,000 American soldiers were deployed to fight land war in Korea. Newspapers, meanwhile, were filled with headlines alleging Soviet espionage.

During the war, Julius Rosenberg worked briefly,

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and had access to classified information, at the US Army Signal Corps Laboratory in New Jersey. He and his wife Ethel, who had both been members of the American Communist Party (CPUSA) in the 1930s, were accused of passing secret bomb-related documents onto Soviet officials and were indicted in August 1950 on charges of giving “nuclear secrets” to the Russians. After a trial in March 1951, they were found guilty and executed on June 19, 1953.

Alger Hiss, the highest-ranking government official linked to Soviet espionage, was another prize for conservatives. Hiss was a prominent official in the U.S. State Department and served as secretary-general of the UN Charter Conference in San Francisco from April to June 1945 before leaving the State Department in 1946. A young congressman and member of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Richard Nixon, made waves by accusing Hiss of espionage. On August 3, 1948, Whittaker Chambers testified before HUAC that he and Hiss had worked together as part of the secret “communist underground” in Washington DC during the 1930s. Hiss, who always maintained his innocence, stood trial twice. After a hung jury in July 1949, he was convicted on two counts of perjury (the statute of limitations for espionage having expired). Although later evidence certainly suggested their guilt, the prominent convictions of a few suspected spies fueled an anti-communist frenzy. Some began seeing communists everywhere.

Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs offered anti-communists such as Joseph McCarthy the evidence they needed to allege a vast Soviet conspiracy to infiltrate and subvert the US government and justify the smearing all left-liberals, even those who were resolutely anti-communist. Not long after his February 1950 speech in Wheeling, McCarthy’s sensational charges became a source of growing controversy. Forced to respond, President Truman arranged a partisan congressional investigation designed to discredit McCarthy. The Tydings Committee held hearings from early March through July, 1950, and issued a final report admonishing McCarthy for perpetrating a “fraud and a hoax” on the American public. American progressives saw McCarthy’s crusade as nothing less than a political witch hunt. In June 1950, *The Nation* magazine editor Freda Kirchwey characterized “McCarthyism” as “the means by which a handful of men, disguised as hunters of subversion, cynically subvert the instruments of justice...in order to help their own political fortunes.” Truman’s liberal supporters, and leftists like Kirchwey, hoped that McCarthy and the new “ism” that bore his name would blow over quickly. But “McCarthyism” was a symptom of a massive and widespread anti-communist hysteria that engulfed Cold War America.

With growing anti-communist excitement and a tough election on the horizon, Truman gave in to pressure in March 1947 and issued Executive Order 9835,



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establishing loyalty reviews for federal employees. In the case of Foreign Service officers, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was empowered to conduct closer examinations of all potential “security risks.” Congressional committees, namely the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI), were authorized to gather facts and hold hearings. After Truman’s “loyalty order,” anti-subversion committees emerged in over a dozen state legislatures and review procedures proliferated in public schools and universities across the country. At the University of California, for example, thirty-one professors were dismissed in 1950 for refusing to sign a loyalty oath. The Senate Internal Security (McCarran) Act, passed in September 1950, mandated all “communist organizations” to register with the government, gave the government greater powers to investigate sedition, made it possible to prevent suspected individuals from gaining or keeping their citizenship. Between 1949 and 1954, HUAC, SPSI, and a new McCarran Committee conducted over one hundred investigations into subversive activities.

There had, of course, been a communist presence in the United States. The Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA) formed in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution when the Bolsheviks created a Communist International (the Comintern) and invited socialists from around the world to join. During its first two years of existence, the CPUSA functioned in secret, hidden from a surge of anti-radical and anti-

immigrant hysteria, investigations, deportations, and raids at the end of World War I. The CPUSA began its public life in 1921, after the panic subsided, but communism remained on the margins of American life until the 1930s, when leftists and liberals began to see the Soviet Union as a symbol of hope amid the Great Depression. Then, many communists joined the “Popular Front,” an effort to make communism mainstream by adapting it to American history and American culture. . During the Popular Front era, communists were integrated into mainstream political institutions through alliances with progressives in the Democratic Party. The CPUSA enjoyed most of its influence and popularity among workers in unions linked to the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Communists also became strong opponents of Jim Crow segregation and developed a presence in both the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The CPUSA, moreover, established “front” groups, such as the League of American Writers, in which intellectuals participated without even knowing of its ties to the Comintern. But even at the height of the global economic crisis, communism never attracted many Americans. Even at the peak of its membership, the CPUSA had just 80,000 national “card-carrying” members. From the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, “the Party” exercised most of its power indirectly, through coalitions with liberals and reformers. When news broke of Hitler and Stalin’s 1939 non-aggression, many fled the Party, feeling betrayed. A bloc of left-liberal anti-communist, meanwhile, purged remaining

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communists in their ranks, and the Popular Front collapsed.

Lacking the legal grounds to abolish the CPUSA, officials instead sought to expose and contain CPUSA influence. Following a series of predecessor committees, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was established in 1938, then reorganized after the war and given the explicit task of investigating communism. By the time the Communist Control Act was passed in August 1954, effectively criminalizing Party membership, the CPUSA had long ceased to have meaningful influence. Anti-communists were driven to eliminate remaining CPUSA influence from progressive institutions, including the NAACP and the CIO. The Taft-Hartley Act (1947) gave union officials the initiative to purge communists from the labor movement. A kind of “Cold War” liberalism took hold. In January 1947, anti-communist liberals formed Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), whose founding members included labor leader Walter Reuther and NAACP chairman Walter White, as well as historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Working to help Truman defeat former vice-president Henry Wallace’s popular front-backed campaign in 1948, the ADA combined social and economic reforms with staunch anti-communism.

The domestic Cold War was bipartisan, fueled by a consensus drawn from a left-liberal and conservative

anti-communist alliance that included politicians and policymakers, journalists and scientists, business and civic/religious leaders, and educators and entertainers. Led by its imperious director, J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI took an active role in the domestic battle against communism. Hoover’s FBI helped incite panic by assisting the creation of blatantly propagandistic films and television shows, including *The Red Menace* (1949), *My Son John*, (1951), and *I Led Three Lives* (1953-1956). Such alarmist depictions of espionage and treason in a ‘free world’ imperiled by communism heightened a culture of fear experienced in the 1950s. In the fall of 1947, HUAC entered the fray with highly publicized hearings of Hollywood. Film mogul Walt Disney and actor Ronald Reagan, among others, testified to aid investigators’ attempts to expose communist influence in the entertainment industry. A group of writers, directors, and producers who refused to answer questions were held in contempt of Congress. This ‘Hollywood Ten’ created the precedent for a ‘blacklist’ in which hundreds of film artists were barred from industry work for the next decade.

HUAC made repeated visits to Hollywood during the 1950s, and their interrogation of celebrities often began with the same intimidating refrain: “Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?” Many witnesses cooperated, and “named names,” naming anyone they knew who had ever been associated with communist-related groups or organizations. In 1956, black entertainer and

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activist Paul Robeson chided his HUAC inquisitors, claiming that they had put him on trial not for his politics, but because he had spent his life “fighting for the rights” of his people. “You are the un-Americans,” he told them, “and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.” As Robeson and other victims of McCarthyism learned first-hand, this “second red scare,” in the glow of nuclear annihilation and global “totalitarianism,” fueled an intolerant and skeptical political world, what Cold War liberal Arthur Schlesinger, in his *The Vital Center* (1949), called an “age of anxiety.”

Anti-communist ideology valorized overt patriotism, religious conviction, and faith in capitalism. Those who shunned such “American values” were open to attack. If communism was a plague spreading across Europe and Asia, anti-communist hyperbole infected cities, towns, and suburbs throughout the country. The playwright Arthur Miller, whose popular 1953 *The Crucible* compared the red scare to the Salem Witch Trials, wrote, “In America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.”



Many accused of Communist sentiments vehemently denied such allegations, including the one of the most well-known Americans at the time, African American actor and signer Paul Robeson. Unwilling to sign an affidavit confirming he was Communist, his U.S. passport was revoked. During the Cold War, he was condemned by the American press and neither his music nor films could be purchased in the U.S. Photograph. [http://i.ytimg.com/vi/zDb9nM\\_iiXw/maxresdefault.jpg](http://i.ytimg.com/vi/zDb9nM_iiXw/maxresdefault.jpg).

Rallying against communism, American society urged conformity. “Deviant” behavior became dangerous. Having entered the workforce *en masse* as part of a collective effort in World War II, middle class women were told to return to house-making responsibilities. Having fought and died abroad to for American democracy, blacks were told to return home and acquiesce to the American racial order. Homosexuality, already stigmatized, became dangerous. Personal secrets were seen as a liability that exposed one to blackmail. The same paranoid

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mindset that fueled the second red scare also ignited the Cold War “lavender scare.”

American religion, meanwhile, was fixated on what McCarthy, in his 1950 Wheeling speech, called an “all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity.” Cold warriors in the US routinely referred to a fundamental incompatibility between “godless communism” and god-fearing Americanism. Religious conservatives championed the idea of traditional nuclear god-fearing family as a bulwark against the spread of atheistic totalitarianism. As Baptist minister Billy Graham sermonized in 1950, communism aimed to “destroy the American home and cause ... moral deterioration,” leaving the country exposed to communist infiltration.

In an atmosphere in which ideas of national belonging and citizenship were so closely linked to religious commitment, Americans during the early Cold War years attended church, professed a belief in a supreme being, and stressed the importance of religion in their lives at higher rates than in any time in American history. Americans sought to differentiate themselves from godless communists through public displays of religiosity. Politicians infused government with religious symbols. The Pledge of Allegiance was altered to include the words “one nation, under God” in 1954. “In God We Trust” was adopted as the official national motto in 1956. In popular culture, one of the most popular films of the decade, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), retold the biblical Exodus

story as a Cold War parable, echoing (incidentally) NSC 68’s characterization of the Soviet Union as a “slave state.” Monuments of the Ten Commandments went to court houses and city halls across the country.

While the link between American nationalism and religion grew much closer during the Cold War, many Americans began to believe that just believing in almost any religion was better than being an atheist. Gone was the overt anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic language of Protestants in the past. Now, leaders spoke of a common “Judeo-Christian” heritage. In December 1952, a month before his inauguration, Dwight Eisenhower said that “our form of government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply-felt religious faith, and I don’t care what it is.”

Joseph McCarthy, an Irish Catholic, made common cause with prominent religious anti-communists, including southern evangelist Billy James Hargis of *Christian Crusade*, a popular radio and television ministry that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. Cold War religion in America also crossed the political divide. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower spoke of US foreign policy as “a war of light against darkness, freedom against slavery, Godliness against atheism.” His Democratic opponent, former Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson said that America was engaged in a battle with the “Anti-Christ.” While Billy Graham became a spiritual adviser to Eisenhower as well as other Republican and Democratic presidents, the same was true of the

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liberal Protestant Reinhold Niebuhr, perhaps the nation's most important theologian when he appeared on the cover of *Life* in March 1948.

Though publicly rebuked by the Tydings Committee, McCarthy soldiered on. In June 1951, on the floor of Congress, McCarthy charged that then-Secretary of Defense (and former secretary of state) Gen. George Marshall had fallen prey to “a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man.” He claimed that Marshall, a war hero, had helped to “diminish the United States in world affairs,” enable the US to “finally fall victim to Soviet intrigue... and Russian military might.” The speech caused an uproar. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower, who was in all things moderate and politically cautious, refused to publicly denounce McCarthy. “I will not...get into the gutter with that guy,” he wrote privately. McCarthy campaigned for Eisenhower, who won a stunning victory.

So did the Republicans, who regained Congress. McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI). He targeted many, and turned his newfound power against the government's overseas broadcast division, the Voice of America (VOA). McCarthy's investigation in February-March 1953 resulted in several resignations or transfers. McCarthy's mudslinging had become increasingly unrestrained. Soon he went after the U.S. Army. After forcing the Army to again disprove theories of a Soviet spy ring at Ft. Monmouth in New

Jersey, McCarthy publicly berated officers suspected of promoting leftists. McCarthy's badgering of witnesses created cover for critics to publicly denounce his abrasive fear-mongering.

On March 9, CBS anchor Edward Murrow, a cold war liberal, told his television audience that McCarthy's actions had “caused alarm and dismay amongst ... allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies.” Yet, Murrow explained, “He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right. ‘The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.’”

Twenty million people saw the “Army-McCarthy Hearings” unfold over thirty-six days in 1954. The Army's head counsel, Joseph Welch, captured much of the mood of the country when he defended a fellow lawyer from McCarthy's public smears, saying, “Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?” In September, a senate subcommittee recommended that McCarthy be censured. On December 2, 1954, his colleagues voted 67-22 to “condemn” his actions. Humiliated, McCarthy faded into irrelevance and alcoholism and died in May 1957, at age 48.

By the late 1950s, the worst of the second red scare was over. Stalin's death, followed by the Korean War armistice, opened new space—and hope—for the easing of Cold War tensions. Détente and the



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upheavals of the late 1960s were on the horizon. But McCarthyism outlasted McCarthy and the 1950s. McCarthy made an almost unparalleled impact on Cold War American society. The tactics he perfected continued to be practiced long after his death. “Red-baiting,” the act of smearing a political opponent by linking them to communism or some other demonized ideology, persevered. McCarthy had hardly alone.

Congressman Richard Nixon, for instance, used his place on HUAC and his public role in the campaign against Alger Hiss to catapult himself into the White House alongside Eisenhower and later into the presidency. Ronald Reagan bolstered the fame he had won in Hollywood with his testimony before Congress and his anti-communist work for major American corporations such as General Electric. He too would use anti-communism to enter public life and chart a course to the presidency. In 1958, radical anti-communists founded the John Birch Society, attacking liberals and civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. as communists. Although joined by Cold War liberals, the weight of anti-communism was used as part of an assault against the New Deal and its defenders. Even those liberals, such as historian Arthur Schlesinger, who had fought against communism found themselves smeared by the red scare. Politics and culture both had been reshaped. The leftist American tradition was in tatters, destroyed by anti-communist hysteria. Movements for social justice, from civil rights to gay rights to feminism, were all suppressed under Cold War conformity.

## V. Decolonization and the Global Reach of the ‘American Century’

In an influential 1941 *Life* magazine editorial titled “The American Century,” publishing magnate Henry Luce, envisioning the United States as a “dominant world power,” outlined his “vision of America as the principal guarantor of freedom of the seas” and “the dynamic leader of world trade.” In his embrace of an American-led international system, the conservative Luce was joined by liberals including historian Arthur Schlesinger, who in his 1949 Cold War tome *The Vital Center*, proclaimed that a “world destiny” had been “thrust” upon the United States, with perhaps no other nation becoming “a more reluctant great power.” Emerging from the war as the world’s preeminent military and economic force, the US was perhaps destined to compete with the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World, where a power vacuum had been created by the demise of European imperialism. As France and Britain in particular struggled in vain to control colonies in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, the United States assumed responsibility for maintaining order and producing a kind of “pax-Americana.” Little of the postwar world, however, would be so peaceful.

Based on the logic of militarized containment established by NSC-68 and American Cold War strategy, interventions in Korea and Vietnam were

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seen as appropriate American responses to the ascent of communism in China. Unless Soviet power in Asia was halted, Chinese influence would ripple across the continent, and one country after another would “fall” to communism. Easily transposed onto any region of the world, the “Domino Theory” became a standard basis for the justification of US interventions abroad, such as in Cuba after 1959, which was seen as a communist beachhead that imperiled Latin America, the Caribbean, and perhaps eventually the United States. Like Ho Chi Minh, Cuban leader Fidel Castro was a revolutionary nationalist whose career as a communist began in earnest after he was rebuffed by the United States and American interventions targeted nations that never espoused official communist positions. Many interventions in Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere were driven by factors that were shaped by but also that transcended anti-communist ideology.

Instead of dismantling its military after World War II, as the United States had after every major conflict, the Cold War facilitated a new permanent defense establishment. Federal investments in national defense affected the entire country. Different regions housed various sectors of what sociologist C. Wright Mills, in 1956, called the “permanent war economy.” The aerospace industry was concentrated in areas like Southern California and Long Island, New York; Massachusetts was home to several universities that received major defense contracts; the Midwest became home base for intercontinental ballistic



*The Cuban Revolution seemed to confirm the fears of many Americans that the spread of communism could not be stopped. It is believed that American government intervened in the new government of Fidel Castro in covert ways, and many attribute the La Coubre explosion to the American Central Intelligence Agency. In this photograph, Castro and Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara march in a memorial for those killed in the explosion in March, 1960 in Havana Cuba. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CheLaCoubre-March.jpg), <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CheLaCoubre-March.jpg>.*

missiles pointed at the Soviet Union; many of the largest defense companies and military installations were concentrated in the South, so much so that in 1956 author William Faulkner, who was born in Mississippi, remarked, “Our economy is the Federal Government.”

A radical critic of US policy, Mills was one of the first thinkers to question the effects of massive defense spending, which, he said, corrupted the ruling class, or “power elite,” who now had the potential to take the country into war for the sake of corporate profits. Yet perhaps the most famous critique of the entrenched war economy came from an unlikely source. During his farewell address to the nation in January 1961, President Eisenhower cautioned Americans against the “unwarranted influence” of a

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“permanent armaments industry of vast proportions” which could threaten “liberties” and “democratic processes.” While the “conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry” was a fairly recent development, this “military-industrial complex” had cultivated a “total influence,” which was “economic, political, even spiritual ... felt in every city ... Statehouse ... [and] office of the Federal government.” There was, he said, great danger in failing to “comprehend its grave implications.”

In Eisenhower’s formulation, the “military-industrial complex” referred specifically to domestic connections between arms manufactures, members of Congress, and the Department of Defense. Yet the new alliance between corporations, politicians, and the military was dependent on having an actual conflict to wage, without which there could be no ultimate financial gain. To critics, military-industrial partnerships at home were now linked to US interests abroad. Suddenly American foreign policy had to ensure foreign markets and secure favorable terms for American trade all across the globe. Seen in such a way, the Cold War was just a bi-product of America’s new role as the remaining Western superpower. Regardless, the postwar rise of US power correlated with what many historians describe as a “national security consensus” that has dominated American policy since World War II. And so the United States was now more intimately involved in world affairs than ever before.

Ideological conflicts and independence movements erupted across the postwar world. More than eighty countries achieved independence, primarily from European control. As it took center stage in the realm of global affairs, the United States played a complicated and often contradictory role in this process of “decolonization.” The sweeping scope of post-1945 US military expansion was unique in the country’s history. Critics believed that the advent of a “standing army,” so feared by many Founders, set a disturbing precedent. But in the postwar world, American leaders eagerly set about maintaining a new permanent military juggernaut and creating viable international institutions.

But what of independence movements around the world? Roosevelt had spoken for many in his remark to British Premier Winston Churchill, in 1941, that it was hard to imagine “fight[ing] a war against fascist slavery, and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from a backward colonial policy.” American postwar foreign policy planners therefore struggled to balance support for decolonization against the reality that national independence movements often posed a threat to America’s global interests.

As American strategy became consumed with thwarting Russian power and the concomitant global spread of communist, to foreign policy officials it increasingly made little difference whether insurgencies or independence movements had direct

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involvement with the Soviet Union, so long as a revolutionary movement or government could in some way be linked to international communism. The Soviet Union, too, was attempting sway the world. Stalin and his successors pushed an agenda that included not only the creation of Soviet client states in Eastern and Central Europe, but also a tendency to support leftwing liberation movements everywhere, particularly when they espoused anti-American sentiment. As a result, the US and the USSR engaged in numerous proxy wars in the “Third World.”

American planners felt that successful decolonization could demonstrate the superiority of democracy and capitalism against competing Soviet models. Their goal was in essence to develop an informal system of world power based as much as possible on consent (hegemony) rather than coercion (empire). European powers still pushed colonization. American officials feared that anti-colonial resistance would breed revolution and push nationalists into the Soviet sphere. And when faced with such movements, American policy dictated alliances with colonial regimes, alienating nationalist leaders in Asia and Africa.

The architects of American power needed to sway the citizens of decolonizing nations toward the United States. In 1948, Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act to “promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries.” The legislation established cultural exchanges with various nations,



The Soviet Union took advantage of the very real racial tensions in the U.S. to create anti-American propaganda. This 1930 Soviet poster shows a black American being lynched from the Statue of Liberty, while the text below asserts the links between racism and Christianity. 1930 issue of *Bezbozhnik*. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bezbozhnik\\_u\\_stanka\\_US\\_1930.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bezbozhnik_u_stanka_US_1930.jpg).

including even the USSR, in order to showcase American values through its artists and entertainers. The Soviets did the same, through what they called an international peace offensive, which by most accounts was more successful than the American campaign. Although making strides through the initiation of various overt and covert programs, US officials still perceived that they were lagging behind the Soviet

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Union in the “war for hearts and minds.” But as unrest festered in much of the Third World, American officials faced difficult choices.

As American blacks fought for justice at home, prominent American black radicals, including Malcolm X, Paul Robeson, and the aging W.E.B. DuBois, joined in solidarity with the global anti-colonial movement, arguing that the United States had inherited the racist European imperial tradition. Supporters of the Soviet Union made their own effort to win over countries in the non-aligned world, claiming that Marxist-Leninist doctrine offered a roadmap for their liberation from colonial bondage. Moreover, Kremlin propaganda pointed to injustices of the American South as an example of American hypocrisy: how could the United States claim to fight for global freedom when it refused to guarantee freedoms for its own citizenry? In such ways the Cold War connected the black freedom struggle, the Third World, and the global Cold War.

## VI. Conclusion

In June 1987, American President Ronald Reagan stood at Berlin Wall and demanded that Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev “Tear down this wall!” Less than three years later, amid civil unrest in November 1989, East German authorities announced that their citizens were free to travel to and from West Berlin. The concrete curtain would be lifted and East Berlin would be opened to the world. Within months, the Berlin Wall was reduced to rubble by jubilant crowds

anticipating the reunification of their city and their nation, which took place on October 3, 1990. By July 1991 the Warsaw Pact had crumbled, and on December 25 of that year, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) were freed from Russian domination.

Partisans fight to claim responsibility for the break-up of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. Whether it was the triumphalist rhetoric and militaristic pressure of conservatives or the internal fracturing of ossified bureaucracies and work of Russian reformers that shaped the ending of the Cold War is a question of later decades. Questions about the Cold War’s end must pause before appreciations of the Cold War’s impact at home and abroad. Whether measured by the tens of millions killed in Cold War-related conflicts, in the reshaping of American politics and culture, or in the transformation of America’s role in the world, the Cold War pushed American history upon a new path, one that it has yet to yield.

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### II. Kennedy and Cuba

The decade's political landscape began with a watershed presidential election. Americans were captivated by the 1960 race between Republican Vice President Richard Nixon and Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy, two candidates who pledged to move the nation forward and invigorate an economy experiencing the worst recession since the Great Depression. Kennedy promised to use federal programs to strengthen the economy and address pockets of longstanding poverty, while Nixon called for a reliance on private enterprise and reduction of government spending. Both candidates faced criticism as well; Nixon had to defend Dwight Eisenhower's domestic policies, while Kennedy, who was attempting to become the first Catholic president, had to counteract questions about his faith and convince voters that he was experienced enough to lead.

One of the most notable events of the Nixon-Kennedy presidential campaign was their televised debate in September, the first of its kind between major presidential candidates. The debate focused on domestic policy and provided Kennedy with an important moment to present himself as a composed, knowledgeable statesman. In contrast, Nixon, an experienced debater who faced higher expectations, looked sweaty and defensive. Radio listeners famously thought the two men performed equally well, but the TV audience was much more impressed by Kennedy, giving him an advantage in subsequent



*The Cuban Missile Crisis was a time of great fear throughout America. Women in this photograph urged President Kennedy to be cautious of instigating war. Phil Stanziola, "800 women strikers for peace on 47 St near the UN Bldg," 1962. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001696167/>.*

debates. Ultimately, the election was extraordinarily close; in the largest voter turnout in American history up to that point, Kennedy bested Nixon by less than one percentage point (34,227,096 to 34,107,646 votes). Although Kennedy's lead in electoral votes was more comfortable at 303 to 219, the Democratic Party's victory did not translate in Congress, where Democrats lost a few seats in both houses. As a result, Kennedy entered office in 1961 without the mandate necessary to achieve the ambitious agenda he would refer to as the New Frontier.

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The United States entered the 1960s unaccustomed to stark foreign policy failures, having emerged from World War II as a global superpower before waging a Cold War against the Soviet Union in the 1950s. In the new decade, unsuccessful conflicts in Cuba and Vietnam would yield embarrassment, fear, and tragedy, stunning a nation used to triumph and altering the way many thought of America's role in international affairs.

On January 8, 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionary army initiated a new era of Cuban history. Having ousted the corrupt Cuban President Fulgenico Batista, who had fled Havana on New Year's Eve, Castro and his rebel forces made their way triumphantly through the capital city's streets. The United States, who had long propped up the Batista's corrupt regime, had withdrawn support and, initially, expressed sympathy for Castro's new government, which was immediately granted diplomatic recognition. But President Dwight Eisenhower and members of his administration were wary. The new Cuban government soon instituted leftist economic policies centered around agrarian reform, land redistribution, and the nationalization of private enterprises. Cuba's wealthy and middle class citizens fled the island in droves. Many settled in Miami, Florida, and other American cities.

The relationship between Cuba and the United States deteriorated rapidly. On October 19, 1960, the United States instituted a near-total trade embargo

to economically isolate the Cuban regime, and in January 1961 the two nations broke off formal diplomatic relations. The Central Intelligence Agency, acting under the mistaken belief that the Castro government lacked popular support and that Cuban citizens would revolt if given the opportunity, began to recruit members of the exile community to participate in an invasion of the island. On April 16, 1961, an invasion force consisting primarily of Cuban émigrés landed on Girón Beach at the Bay of Pigs. Cuban soldiers and civilians quickly overwhelmed the exiles, many of whom were taken prisoner. The Cuban government's success at thwarting the Bay of Pigs invasion did much to legitimize the new regime and was a tremendous embarrassment for the Kennedy administration.

As the political relationship between Cuba and the United States disintegrated, the Castro government became more closely aligned with the Soviet Union. This strengthening of ties set the stage for the Cuban Missile Crisis, perhaps the most dramatic foreign policy crisis in the history of the United States. In 1962, in response to the US's long-time maintenance of a nuclear arsenal in Turkey and at the invitation of the Cuban government, the Soviet Union deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba. On October 14, 1962, American spy planes detected the construction of missile launch sites, and on October 22, President Kennedy addressed the American people to alert them to this threat. Over the course of the next several days, the world watched in horror as the United States and

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the Soviet Union hovered on the brink of nuclear war. Finally, on October 28, the Soviet Union agreed to remove its missiles from Cuba in exchange for a U.S. agreement to remove its missiles from Turkey and a formal pledge that the United States would not invade Cuba, and the crisis was resolved peacefully.

Though the Cuban Missile Crisis temporarily halted the flow of Cuban refugees into the United States, emigration began again in earnest in the mid-1960s. In 1965, the Johnson administration and the Castro government brokered a deal that facilitated the re-union of families that had been separated by earlier waves of migration, opening the door for thousands to leave the island. In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Cuban Adjustment Act, a law allowing Cuban refugees to become permanent residents. Over the course of the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Cubans left their homeland and built new lives in America.

hit campuses, and assassinations robbed the nation of many of its leaders. The forward-thinking spirit of a complex decade had waned. Uncertainty loomed.

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## VII. Conclusion

In 1969, Americans hailed the moon landing as a profound victory in the “space race” against the Soviet Union that fulfilled the promise of the late John F. Kennedy, who had declared in 1961 that the U.S. would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. But while Neil Armstrong said his steps marked “one giant leap for mankind,” and Americans marveled at the achievement, the brief moment of wonder only punctuated years of turmoil. The Vietnam War disillusioned a generation, riots rocked cities, protests

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*Abandoned Packard Automotive Plant in Detroit, Michigan. Via [Wikimedia](#).*

## I. Introduction

In December 6, 1969, an estimated 300,000 people converged on the Altamont Motor Speedway in Northern California for a massive free concert headlined by the Rolling Stones and featuring some of the era's other great rock acts. Only four months earlier, Woodstock had shown the world the power of peace and love and American youth. Altamont was supposed to be "Woodstock West."

But Altamont was a disorganized disaster. Inadequate sanitation, a horrid sound system, and tainted drugs strained concertgoers. To save money, the Hell's Angels biker gang was paid \$500 in beer to

be the show's "security team." The crowd grew progressively angrier throughout the day. Fights broke out. Tensions rose. The Angels, drunk and high, armed themselves with sawed-off pool cues and indiscriminately beat concert-goers who tried to come on the stage. The Grateful Dead refused to play. Finally, the Stones came on stage.

The crowd's anger was palpable. Fights continued near the stage. Mick Jagger stopped in the middle of playing "Sympathy for the Devil" to try and calm the crowd: "Everybody be cool now, c'mon," he plead. Then, a few songs later, in the middle of "Under my Thumb," eighteen-year-old Meredith Hunter approached the stage and was beaten back. Pissed off

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and high on methamphetamines, Hunter brandished a pistol, charged again, and was stabbed and killed by an Angel. His lifeless body was stomped into the ground. The Stones just kept playing.

If the more famous Woodstock music festival captured the idyll of the sixties youth culture, Altamont revealed its dark side. There, drugs and music and youth were associated not with peace and love but with anger, violence, and death. Likewise, while many Americans in the 1970s continued to celebrate the political and cultural achievements of the previous decade, a more anxious, conservative mood grew across the nation. For some, the United States had not gone nearly far enough to promote greater social equality; for others, the nation had gone too far, unfairly trampling the rights of one group to promote the selfish needs of another. Onto these brewing dissatisfactions the 1970s dumped the divisive remnants of a failed war, the country's greatest political scandal, and an intractable economic crisis. It seemed as if the nation was ready to unravel.

## II. The Strain of Vietnam

Perhaps no single issue contributed more to public disillusionment than the Vietnam War. As the war deteriorated, the Johnson administration escalated American involvement by deploying hundreds of thousands of troops to prevent the communist takeover of the South. Stalemate, body counts, hazy war aims, and the draft catalyzed an antiwar movement

and triggered protests throughout the U.S. and Europe. With no end in sight, protesters burned their draft cards, refused to pay their income taxes, occupied government buildings, and delayed trains loaded with war materials. By 1967, antiwar demonstrations were drawing hundreds of thousands. In one protest, hundreds were arrested after surrounding the Pentagon.

Vietnam was the first “living room war.” Television, print media, and open access to the battlefield provided unprecedented coverage of the conflict's brutality. Americans confronted grisly images of casualties and atrocities. In 1965, *CBS Evening News* aired a segment in which United States Marines burned the South Vietnamese village of Cam Ne with little apparent regard for the lives of its occupants, who had been accused of aiding Viet Cong guerrillas. President Johnson berated the head of CBS, yelling over the phone, “[Y]our boys just shat on the American flag.”

While the U.S. government imposed no formal censorship on the press during Vietnam, the White House and military nevertheless used press briefings and interviews to paint a deceptive image of the war. The U.S. was winning the war, officials claimed. They cited numbers of enemies killed, villages secured, and South Vietnamese troops trained. However, American journalists in Vietnam quickly realized the hollowness of such claims (the press referred to afternoon press briefing in Saigon as “the Five O’Clock Follies”).



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Editors frequently toned down their reporters' pessimism, often citing conflicting information received from their own sources, who were typically government officials. But the evidence of a stalemate mounted.

Stories like CBS's Cam Ne piece exposed a "credibility gap," the yawning chasm between the claims of official sources and the increasingly evident reality on the ground in Vietnam. Nothing did more to expose this gap than the 1968 Tet Offensive. In January, communist forces engaged in a coordinated attack on more than one hundred American and South Vietnamese sites throughout South Vietnam, including the American embassy in Saigon. While U.S. forces repulsed the attack and inflicted heavy casualties on the Viet Cong, Tet demonstrated that, despite the repeated claims of administration officials, the enemy could still strike at will anywhere in the country, even despite years of war. Subsequent stories and images eroded public trust even further. In 1969, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh revealed that U.S. troops had massacred and/or raped hundreds of civilians in the village of My Lai. Three years later, Americans cringed at Nick Ut's wrenching photograph of a naked Vietnamese child fleeing an American napalm attack. More and more American voices came out against the war.

Reeling from the war's growing unpopularity, on March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced



*Frank Wolfe, Vietnam War protesters at the March on the Pentagon, Lyndon B. Johnson Library via [Wikimedia](#).*

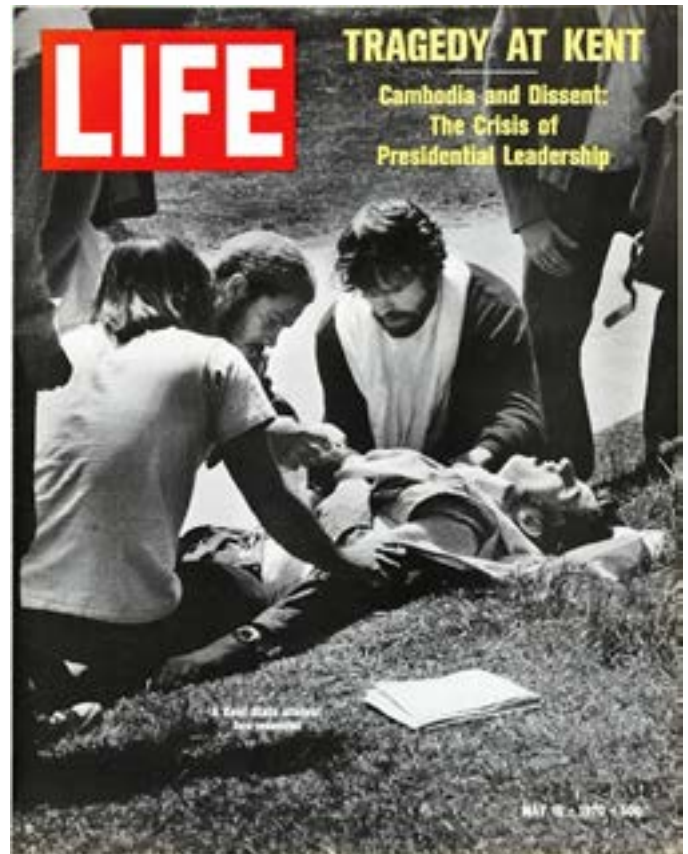
on national television that he would not seek reelection. Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy unsuccessfully battled against Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, for the Democratic Party nomination (Kennedy was assassinated in June). At the Democratic Party's national convention in Chicago, local police brutally assaulted protesters on national television.

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For many Americans, the violent clashes outside the convention hall reinforced their belief that civil society was coming unraveled. Republican challenger Richard Nixon played on these fears, running on a platform of “law and order” and a vague plan to end the war. Well aware of domestic pressure to wind down the war, Nixon sought, on the one hand, to appease antiwar sentiment by promising to phase out the draft, train South Vietnamese forces to assume more responsibility for the war effort, and gradually withdraw American troops. Nixon and his advisors called it “Vietnamization.” At the same time, Nixon appealed to the so-called “silent majority” of Americans who still supported the war (and opposed the antiwar movement) by calling for an “honorable” end to U.S. involvement—what he later called “peace with honor.” He narrowly edged Humphrey in the fall’s election.

Public assurances of American withdrawal, however, masked a dramatic escalation of conflict. Looking to incentivize peace talks, Nixon pursued a “madman strategy” of attacking communist supply lines across Laos and Cambodia, hoping to convince the North Vietnamese that he would do anything to stop the war. Conducted without public knowledge or Congressional approval, the bombings failed to spur the peace process and talks stalled before the American imposed November 1969 deadline. News of the attacks renewed anti-war demonstrations. Police and National Guard troops killed six students



*“Tragedy at Kent,” May 15, 1970, Life Magazine.*

in separate protests at Jackson State University in Mississippi, and, more famously, Kent State University in Ohio in 1970.

Another three years passed—and another 20,000 American troops died—before an agreement was reached. After Nixon threatened to withdraw all aid and guaranteed to enforce a treaty militarily, the North and South Vietnamese governments signed the Paris Peace Accords in January of 1973, marking the official end of U.S. force commitment to the Vietnam War. Peace was tenuous, and when war resumed North Vietnamese troops quickly overwhelmed

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Southern forces. By 1975, despite nearly a decade of direct American military engagement, Vietnam was united under a communist government.

The Vietnam War profoundly influenced domestic politics. Moreover, it poisoned many Americans' perceptions of their government and its role in the world. And yet, while the antiwar demonstrations attracted considerable media attention and stand as a hallmark of the sixties counterculture so popularly remembered today, many Americans nevertheless continued to regard the war as just. Wary of the rapid social changes that reshaped American society in the 1960s and worried that antiwar protests threatened an already tenuous civil order, a growing number of Americans criticized the protests and moved closer to a resurgent American conservatism that brewed throughout the 1970s.

## V. The Rise and Fall of Richard Nixon

Beleaguered by an unpopular war, inflation, and domestic unrest, President Johnson opted against reelection in March of 1968—an unprecedented move in modern American politics. The forthcoming presidential election was shaped by Vietnam and the aforementioned unrest as much as the campaigns of Democratic nominee Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Republican Richard Nixon, and third-party challenger George Wallace, the infamous segregationist governor of Alabama. The Democratic Party was in disarray in

the spring of 1968, when senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy challenged Johnson's nomination and the president responded with his shocking announcement. Nixon's candidacy was aided further by riots that broke out across the country after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the shock and dismay experienced after the slaying of Robert Kennedy in June. The Republican nominee's campaign was defined by shrewd maintenance of his public appearances and a pledge to restore peace and prosperity to what he called "the silent center; the millions of people in the middle of the political spectrum." This campaign for "the Silent Majority" was carefully calibrated to attract suburban Americans by linking liberals with violence and protest and rioting. Many embraced Nixon's message; a September 1968 poll found that 80 percent of Americans believed public order had "broken down."

Meanwhile, Humphrey struggled to distance himself from Johnson and maintain working-class support in northern cities, where voters were drawn to Wallace's appeals for law and order and a rejection of civil rights. The vice president had a final surge in northern cities with the aid of union support, but it was not enough to best Nixon's campaign. The final tally was close: Nixon won 43.3 percent of the popular vote (31,783,783), narrowly besting Humphrey's 42.7 percent (31,266,006). Wallace, meanwhile, carried five states in the Deep South, and his 13.5 percent (9,906,473) of the popular vote constituted an impressive showing for a third-party candidate. The

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Electoral College vote was more decisive for Nixon; he earned 302 electoral votes, while Humphrey and Wallace received only 191 and 45 votes, respectively. Although Republicans won a few seats, Democrats retained control of both the House and Senate and made Nixon the first president in 120 years to enter office with the opposition party controlling both houses.

Once installed in the White House, Richard Nixon focused his energies on American foreign policy, publicly announcing the “Nixon Doctrine” in 1969. On the one hand, Nixon asserted the supremacy of American democratic capitalism and conceded that the U.S. would continue supporting its allies financially. However, he denounced previous administrations’ willingness to commit American forces to third-world conflicts and warned other states to assume responsibility for their own defense. He was turning America away from the policy of active, anti-communist containment, and toward a new strategy of “détente.”

Promoted by national security advisor and eventual Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, détente sought to stabilize the international system by thawing relations with Cold War rivals and bilaterally freezing arms levels. Taking advantage of tensions between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union, Nixon pursued closer relations with both in order to de-escalate tensions and strengthen the United States’ position relative to each. The strategy



*Richard Nixon campaigns in Philadelphia during the 1968 presidential election. National Archives via [Wikimedia](#)*

seemed to work. Nixon became the first American president to visit communist China (1971) and the first since Franklin Roosevelt to visit the Soviet Union (1972). Direct diplomacy and cultural exchange programs with both countries grew and culminated with the formal normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations and the signing of two U.S.-Soviet arms agreements: the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty and the Strategic Arms Limit Treaty (SALT I). By 1973, after almost thirty years of Cold War tension, peaceful coexistence suddenly seemed possible.

Soon, though, a fragile calm gave way once again to Cold War instability. In November 1973, Nixon appeared on television to inform Americans that energy had become “a serious national problem” and that the United States was “heading toward the most acute shortages of energy since World War II.” The previous month Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a cartel of the world’s leading oil producers, embargoed oil exports to the United States in retaliation for American intervention in the Middle



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East. The embargo launched the first U.S. energy crisis. By the end of 1973, the global price of oil had quadrupled. Drivers waited in line for hours to fill up their cars. Individual gas stations ran out of gas. American motorists worried that oil could run out at any moment. A Pennsylvania man died when his emergency stash of gasoline ignited in his trunk and backseat. OPEC rescinded its embargo in 1974, but the economic damage had been done. The crisis extended into the late 1970s.

Like the Vietnam War, the oil crisis showed that small countries could still hurt the United States. At a time of anxiety about the nation's future, Vietnam and the energy crisis accelerated Americans' disenchantment with the United States' role in the world and the efficacy and quality of its leaders. Furthermore, government scandals in the 1970s and early 80s sapped trust in America's public institutions. In 1971, the Nixon administration tried unsuccessfully to sue the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to prevent the publication of the Pentagon Papers, a confidential and damning history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam commissioned by the Defense Department and later leaked. The Papers showed how presidents from Truman to Johnson repeatedly deceived the public on the war's scope and direction. Nixon faced a rising tide of congressional opposition to the war, and Congress asserted unprecedented oversight of American war spending. In 1973, it passed the War Powers Resolution, which dramatically reduced the president's ability to wage war without congressional consent.

However, no scandal did more to unravel public trust than Watergate. On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested inside the offices of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in the Watergate Complex in downtown Washington, D.C. After being tipped by a security guard, police found the men attempting to install sophisticated bugging equipment. One of those arrested was a former CIA employee then working as a security aide for the Nixon administration's Committee to Reelect the President (lampooned as "CREEP").

While there is no direct evidence that Nixon ordered the Watergate break-in, he had been recorded in conversation with his Chief of Staff requesting the DNC chairman be illegally wiretapped to obtain the names of the committee's financial supporters. The names could then be given to the Justice Department and the IRS to conduct spurious investigations into their personal affairs. Nixon was also recorded ordering his Chief of Staff to break into the offices of the Brookings Institute and take files relating to the war in Vietnam, saying, "Goddamn it, get in and get those files. Blow the safe and get it."

Whether or not the president ordered the Watergate break-in, the White House launched a massive cover-up. Administration officials ordered the CIA to halt the FBI investigation and paid hush-money to the burglars and White House aides. Nixon distanced himself from the incident publicly and went on to win a landslide election victory in November 1972.



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But, thanks largely to two persistent journalists at the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, information continued to surface that tied the burglaries ever closer to the CIA, the FBI, and the White House. The Senate held televised hearings. Citing “executive privilege,” Nixon refused to comply with orders to produce tapes from the White House’s secret recording system. In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved a bill to impeach the president. Nixon resigned before the full House could vote on impeachment. He became the first and only American president to resign from office.

Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as his successor and a month later granted Nixon a full presidential pardon. Nixon disappeared from public life without ever publicly apologizing, accepting responsibility, or facing charges.

### VIII. The Misery Index

Although Nixon eluded prosecution, Watergate continued to weigh on voters’ minds. It netted big congressional gains for Democrats in the 1974 mid-term elections, and Ford’s pardon damaged his chances in 1976. Former one-term Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, a nuclear physicist and peanut farmer who represented the rising generation of younger, racially liberal “New South” Democrats, captured the Democratic nomination. Unidentified with either his party’s liberal or conservative wings, his appeal was more personal and moral than political. He ran on no great



*Pumpkins carved in the likeness of President Jimmy Carter in Polk County, Florida, October 1980, State Library and Archives of Florida via Flickr.*

political issues, letting his background as a hardworking, honest, Southern Baptist navy-man ingratiate him to voters around the country, especially in his native South, where support for Democrats had wavered in the wake of the civil rights movement. Carter’s wholesome image was painted in direct contrast to the memory of Nixon, and by association with the man who pardoned him. Carter sealed his party’s nomination in June and won a close victory in November.

When Carter took the oath of office on January 20, 1977, however, he became president of a nation in

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the midst of economic turmoil. Oil shocks, inflation, stagnant growth, unemployment, and sinking wages weighed down the nation's economy. Some of these problems were traceable to the end of World War II, when American leaders erected a complex system of trade policies to help rebuild the shattered economies of Western Europe and Asia. After the war, American diplomats and politicians used trade relationships to win influence and allies around the globe. They saw the economic health of their allies, particularly West Germany and Japan, as a crucial bulwark against the expansion of communism. Americans encouraged these nations to develop vibrant export-oriented economies and tolerated restrictions on U.S. imports.

This came at great cost to the United States. As the American economy stalled, Japan and West Germany soared and became major forces in the global production for autos, steel, machine tools, and electrical products. By 1970, the United States began to run massive trade deficits. The value of American exports dropped and the prices of its imports skyrocketed. Coupled with the huge cost of the Vietnam War and the rise of oil-producing states in the Middle East, growing trade deficits sapped the United States' dominant position in the global economy.

American leaders didn't know how to respond. After a series of negotiations with leaders from France, Great Britain, West Germany, and Japan in 1970 and 1971, the Nixon administration allowed



*The 1979 energy crisis prompted a panic for consumers who remembered the 1973 oil shortage, prompting many Americans to buy oil in huge quantities. Long lines and high gas prices characterized 1979, oil prices to remained quite high until the mid-1980s. Warren K. Leffler, "Gasoline lines," June 15, 1979. Library of Congress.*

these rising industrial nations to continue flouting the principles of free trade. They maintained trade barriers that sheltered their domestic markets from foreign competition while at the same time exporting growing amounts of goods to the United States, which no longer maintained so comprehensive a tariff system. By 1974, in response to U.S. complaints and their own domestic economic problems, many of these industrial nations overhauled their protectionist practices but developed even subtler methods (such as state subsidies for key industries) to nurture their economies.

The result was that Carter, like Ford before him, presided over a hitherto unimagined economic dilemma: the simultaneous onset of inflation and economic stagnation, a combination popularized as "stagflation." Neither Ford nor Carter had the means or ambition to protect American jobs and goods

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from foreign competition. As firms and financial institutions invested, sold goods, and manufactured in new rising economies like Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, and elsewhere, American politicians allowed them to sell their often less costly products in the United States.

As American officials institutionalized this new unfettered global trade, many American manufacturers perceived only one viable path to sustained profitability: moving overseas, often by establishing foreign subsidiaries or partnering with foreign firms. Investment capital, especially in manufacturing, fled the U.S. looking for overseas investments and hastened the decline in the productivity of American industry.

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had touted the “misery index,” the simple addition of the unemployment rate to the inflation rate, as an indictment of Gerald Ford and Republican rule. But Carter failed to slow the unraveling of the American economy and the stubborn and confounding rise of both unemployment and inflation damaged his presidency.

Just as Carter failed to offer or enact policies to stem the unraveling of the American economy, his idealistic vision of human rights-based foreign policy crumbled. He had not made human rights a central theme in his campaign, but in May 1977 he declared his wish to move away from a foreign policy in which

“inordinate fear of communism” caused American leaders to “adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries.” Carter proposed instead “a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision.”

Carter’s human rights policy achieved real victories: the U.S. either reduced or eliminated aid to American-supported right-wing dictators guilty of extreme human rights abuses in places like South Korea, Argentina, and the Philippines. In September 1977, Carter negotiated the return to Panama of the Panama Canal, which cost him enormous political capital in the United States. A year later, in September 1978, Carter negotiated a peace treaty between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The Camp David Accords—named for the president’s rural Maryland retreat, where thirteen days of secret negotiations were held—represented the first time an Arab state had recognized Israel, and the first time Israel promised Palestine self-government. The Accords had limits, both for Israel and the Palestinians, but they represented a major foreign policy coup for Carter.

And yet Carter’s dreams of a human rights-based foreign policy crumbled before the Cold War and the realities of American politics. The United States continued to provide military and financial support for dictatorial regimes vital to American interests, such as the oil-rich state of Iran. When the President and First Lady Rosalynn Carter visited

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Tehran, Iran in January 1978, the President praised the nation's dictatorial ruler, Shah Reza Pahlavi, and remarked on the "respect and the admiration and love" Iranians had for their leader. When the Shah was deposed in November 1979, revolutionaries stormed the American embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two Americans hostage. Americans not only experienced another oil crisis as Iran's oil fields shut down, they watched America's news programs, for 444 days, remind them of the hostages and America's new global impotence. Carter couldn't win their release. A failed rescue mission only ended in the deaths of eight American servicemen. Already beset with a punishing economy, Carter's popularity plummeted.

Carter's efforts to ease the Cold War by achieving a new nuclear arms control agreement disintegrated under domestic opposition from conservative Cold War hawks such as Ronald Reagan, who accused Carter of weakness. A month after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, a beleaguered Carter committed the United States to defending its "interests" in the Middle East against Soviet incursions, declaring that "an assault [would] be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The "Carter Doctrine" not only signaled Carter's ambivalent commitment to deescalation and human rights, it testified to his increasingly desperate presidency.

The collapse of American manufacturing, the stubborn rise of inflation, the sudden impotence of American foreign policy, and a culture ever more divided: the sense of unraveling pervaded the nation. "I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy," Jimmy Carter said in televised address on July 15, 1979. "The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will."

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# THE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT

## X. The New Right Abroad

If the conservative movement recovered lost ground on the field on gender and sexual politics, it captured the battlefield on American foreign policy in the 1980s—for a time, at least. Ronald Reagan entered office a committed Cold Warrior. He held the Soviet Union in contempt, denouncing it in a 1983 speech as an “evil empire.” And he never doubted that the Soviet Union would end up “on the ash heap of history,” as he said in a 1982 speech to the British Parliament. Indeed, Reagan believed it was the duty of the United States to speed the Soviet Union to its inevitable demise. His “Reagan Doctrine” declared that the United States would supply aid to anti-communist forces everywhere in the world. To give this doctrine force, Reagan oversaw an enormous expansion in the defense budget. Federal spending on defense rose from \$171 billion in 1981 to \$229 billion in 1985, the highest level since the Vietnam War. He described this as a policy of “peace through strength,” a phrase that appealed to Americans who, during the 1970s, feared that the United States was losing its status as the world’s most powerful nation. Yet the irony is that Reagan, for all his militarism, helped bring the Cold War to an end. He achieved it not through nuclear weapons but through negotiation, a tactic he had once scorned.

Reagan’s election came at a time when many Americans feared their country was in an irreversible decline. American forces withdrew in disarray from



*Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, leaders of two of the world’s most powerful countries, formed an alliance that benefited both throughout their tenures in office. Photograph of Margaret Thatcher with Ronald Reagan at Camp David, December 22, 1984. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thatcher_Reagan_Camp_David_sofa_1984.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thatcher\\_Reagan\\_Camp\\_David\\_sofa\\_1984.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thatcher_Reagan_Camp_David_sofa_1984.jpg).*

South Vietnam in 1975. The United States returned control of the Panama Canal to Panama in 1978, despite protests from conservatives. Pro-American dictators were toppled in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan that same year, leading conservatives to warn about American weakness in the face of Soviet expansion. Such warnings were commonplace in the 1970s. “Team B,” a group of intellectuals commissioned by the CIA to examine Soviet capabilities, released a report in 1976 stating that “all evidence points to an undeviating Soviet commitment to...global Soviet hegemony.” The Committee on the Present Danger, an organization of conservative foreign policy experts, issued similar statements. When Reagan warned, as he did in 1976, that “this nation has become Number Two in a world where it is dangerous—if not fatal—to be second best,” he was speaking to these fears of decline.



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The Reagan administration made Latin America a showcase for its newly assertive policies. Jimmy Carter had sought to promote human rights in the region, but Reagan and his advisers scrapped this approach and instead focused on fighting communism—a term they applied to all Latin American left-wing movements. Reagan justified American intervention by pointing out Latin America’s proximity to the United States: “San Salvador [in El Salvador] is closer to Houston, Texas, than Houston is to Washington, DC,” he said in one speech, adding, “Central America *is* America.” And so when communists with ties to Cuba overthrew the government of the Caribbean nation of Grenada in October 1983, Reagan dispatched the United States Marines to the island. Dubbed “Operation Urgent Fury,” the Grenada invasion overthrew the leftist government after less than a week of fighting. Despite the relatively minor nature of the mission, its success gave victory-hungry Americans something to cheer about after the military debacles of the previous two decades.

Grenada was the only time Reagan deployed the American military in Latin America, but the United States also influenced the region by supporting rightwing, anti-communist movements there. From 1981 to 1990, the United States gave more than \$4 billion to the government of El Salvador in a largely futile effort to defeat the guerillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).



*Operation Urgent Fury, the U.S. invasion of Grenada, was broadly supported by the U.S. public. This photograph shows the deployment of U.S. Army Rangers into Grenada. Photograph, October 25, 1983. [Wikimedia](#).*

Salvadoran security forces equipped with American weapons committed numerous atrocities, including the slaughter of almost 1,000 civilians at the village of El Mozote in December 1981. The United States also supported the contras, a right-wing insurgency fighting the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Reagan, overlooking the contras’ brutal tactics, hailed them as the “moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers.”

The Reagan administration took a more cautious approach in the Middle East, where its policy was determined by a mix of anti-communism and hostility to the Islamic government of Iran. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the United States supplied Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with military intelligence and business credits—even after it became clear that Iraqi forces were using chemical weapons. Reagan’s greatest setback in the Middle East came in 1982,

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when, shortly after Israel invaded Lebanon, he dispatched Marines to the Lebanese city of Beirut to serve as a peacekeeping force. On October 23, 1983, a suicide bomber killed 241 Marines stationed in Beirut. Congressional pressure and anger from the American public forced Reagan to recall the Marines from Lebanon in March 1984. Reagan's decision demonstrated that, for all his talk of restoring American power, he took a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. He was unwilling to risk another Vietnam by committing American troops to Lebanon.

Though Reagan's policies toward Central America and the Middle East aroused protest, it was his policy on nuclear weapons that generated the most controversy. Initially Reagan followed the examples of presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter by pursuing arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union. American officials participated in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force Talks (INF) that began in 1981 and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in 1982. But the breakdown of these talks in 1983 led Reagan to proceed with plans to place Pershing II nuclear missiles in Western Europe to counter Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. Reagan went a step further in March 1983, when he announced plans for a "Strategic Defense Initiative," a space-based system that could shoot down incoming Soviet missiles. Critics derided the program as a "Star Wars" fantasy, and even Reagan's advisors harbored doubts. "We don't have the technology to do this," Secretary of State George Shultz told aides. These

aggressive policies fed a growing "nuclear freeze" movement throughout the world. In the United States, organizations like the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy organized protests that culminated in a June 1982 rally that drew almost a million people to New York City's Central Park.

Protests in the streets were echoed by resistance in Congress. Congressional Democrats opposed Reagan's policies on the merits; congressional Republicans, though they supported Reagan's anti-communism, were wary of the administration's fondness for circumventing Congress. In 1982 the House voted 411-0 to approve the Boland Amendment, which barred the United States from supplying funds to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government. A second Boland Amendment in 1984 prohibited any funding for the anti-Sandinista contra movement. The Reagan administration's determination to flout these amendments led to a scandal that almost destroyed Reagan's presidency. Robert MacFarlane, the president's National Security Advisor, and Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council, raised money to support the contras by selling American missiles to Iran and funneling the money to Nicaragua. When their scheme was revealed in 1986, it was hugely embarrassing for Reagan. The president's underlings had not only violated the Boland Amendments but had also, by selling arms to Iran, made a mockery of Reagan's declaration that "America will never make concessions to the terrorists." But while the Iran-Contra affair generated

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comparisons to the Watergate scandal, investigators were never able to prove Reagan knew about the operation. Without such a “smoking gun,” talk of impeaching Reagan remained simply talk.

Though the Iran-Contra scandal tarnished the Reagan administration’s image, it did not derail Reagan’s most significant achievement: easing tensions with the Soviet Union. This would have seemed impossible in Reagan’s first term, when the president exchanged harsh words with a rapid succession of Soviet leaders—Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko. In 1985, however, the aged Chernenko’s unsurprising death handed leadership of the Soviet Union to Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev, a true believer in socialism, nonetheless realized that the Soviet Union desperately needed to reform its stolid Stalinism. He instituted a program of *perestroika*, which referred to the restructuring of the Soviet system, and of *glasnost*, which meant greater transparency in government. Gorbachev also reached out to Reagan in hopes of negotiating an end the arms race that was bankrupting the Soviet Union. Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva, Switzerland in 1985 and Reykjavik, Iceland in 1986. The summits failed any concrete agreements—largely thanks to Reagan’s refusal to limit the Strategic Defense Initiative. But the two leaders developed a relationship unprecedented in the history of US-Soviet relations. This trust made possible the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987, which committed both sides to a sharp reduction in their nuclear arsenal.



*President Reagan proposed space- and ground-based systems to protect the United States from nuclear missiles in his 1984 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Scientists argued it was unrealistic or impossible with contemporary technology, and it was lambasted in the media as “Star Wars.” Indeed, as this artist’s representation of SDI shows, it was rather ridiculous. Created October 18, 1984. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Space\\_Laser\\_Satellite\\_Defense\\_System\\_Concept.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Space_Laser_Satellite_Defense_System_Concept.jpg).*

By the late 1980s the Soviet empire was crumbling. Some credit must go to Reagan, who successfully combined anti-communist rhetoric (such as his 1987 speech at the Berlin Wall, where he declared, “General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace...tear down this wall!”) with a willingness to negotiate with Soviet leadership. But most significant causes of collapse lay within the Soviet empire itself. Soviet-allied governments in Eastern Europe tottered under pressure from dissident organizations like Poland’s Solidarity and East Germany’s Neues Forum. Some of these countries, such as Poland, were also pressured from within by the Roman Catholic Church, which had turned toward active anti-communism under Pope John Paul II. When Gorbachev made it clear that he would not send the Soviet military to prop up these regimes, they collapsed one by one in 1989—in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria,

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and East Germany. Within the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's proposed reforms unraveled the decaying Soviet system rather than bringing stability. By 1991 the Soviet Union itself had vanished, dissolving into a "Commonwealth of Independent States."

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

# UNIT 10

## TIMELINE

| The Cold War Timeline: 1940's |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1945                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feb. 4 -11: Yalta Conference—Genesis of Cold War</li> <li>Apr.: United Nations meets in San Francisco</li> <li><b>May 8: Germany surrenders to Allies</b></li> <li>Jul. 16 - Aug. 2: Potsdam Conference (after Truman refused to meet with and “baby” the Soviets)</li> <li>Aug. 6: U.S. drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima</li> <li>Aug. 8: USSR enters war against Japan</li> <li><b>Aug. 14: Japan surrenders—End of World War II</b></li> </ul> |
| 1946                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March: Winston Churchill delivers “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton, Missouri.</li> </ul>   |
| 1947                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June: Marshall Plan is announced</li> </ul>   |
| 1948                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Security Council created to oversee American security and defense</li> <li>February: Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia</li> <li>June 24: Berlin Blockade by USSR begins</li> <li>Israel becomes an independent state; regional conflict erupts</li> </ul>   |
| 1949                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: NATO ratified as a military organization</li> <li>May 12: Berlin Blockade ends</li> <li>September: Communists take control of China</li> <li>September: USSR explodes its first atomic bomb</li> </ul>  |
| The Cold War Timeline: 1950's |  |
| 1950                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>June: Korean War begins</b> (United Nations)</li> </ul>  |
| 1951                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 12: Fed. Civil Defense Administration established</li> </ul>  |
| 1953                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March: Soviet leader Joseph Stalin died (Georgy Malenkov succeeds)</li> <li><b>July: Korean War ends</b></li> </ul>   |
| 1954                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March: KGB established</li> <li>CIA helps overthrow unfriendly regimes in Iran</li> <li><b>July: Vietnam split at 17th parallel after French defeated; US involvement starts</b></li> </ul>   |



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## TIMELINE

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>1955</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nikita Khrushchev becomes leader of USSR</li> <li>May: Warsaw Pact formed</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1956</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: Egypt seizes the Suez Canal leading to Suez crisis with Britain and France attacking Egypt. The US &amp; UN objected to the attack.</li> <li>October - November: Rebellion put down by Spvoets in Communist Hungary.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1957</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October - November: USSR launches <i>Sputnik</i> into Earth orbit.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1958</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November: Khrushchev demands U.S. troops leave Berlin.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1959</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January: Fidel Castro takes over Cuba.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Cold War Timeline: 1960's</b> |  |
| <b>1960</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May 1: U.S. U2 spy plane shot down over Russia</li> <li>November: John F. Kennedy elected President</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1961</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April 12: USSR astronaut Gagarin first to orbit Earth</li> <li>April 13: Berlin border closed</li> <li>August 17: Construction of Berlin Wall begins</li> <li>April 17 - 19: Bay of Pigs invasion, Cuba</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1962</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. involvement in Vietnam increases (16,000 advisors &amp; \$185 million in military aid sent)</li> <li>June: US Army Europe troop strength peaks at 277,342 for the Cold War era (1946-1991).</li> <li>October: Cuban Missile Crisis (nuclear war narrowly averted)</li> </ul> |
| <b>1963</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: Nuclear Test Ban Treaty ratified</li> <li>August: Red Phone/hot line installed between Moscow and Washington D.C.</li> <li>November: US Government with Vietnamese Army killed South Vietnam leader Ngo Dinh Diem</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1964</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>August: Gulf of Tonkin incident -- Start of Vietnam War.</b></li> <li>October: Khrushchev removed from power. Leonid Brezhnev replaces him as Soviet leader.</li> <li>October 16: China detonates its first atomic bomb</li> </ul>   |

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## TIMELINE

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|------|--|
| 1968 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January: North Korea captures <u>USS Pueblo</u></li> <li>August: Soviet Troops crush Czechoslovakian revolt</li> <li>November: Richard Nixon elected on promise of Vietnamization and de'tente (Henry Kissinger – National Security Advisor)</li> </ul> |
| 1969 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July 20: U.S. lands first man on moon</li> </ul>  |

### The Cold War Timeline: 1970's

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1970 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April: President Richard Nixon extends Vietnam War to Cambodia</li> </ul>   |
| 1972 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: Nixon met with Soviet Premiere Leonid Brezhnev SALT I nuclear treaty signed</li> </ul>  |
| 1973 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January: Ceasefire in Vietnam between North Vietnam &amp; U.S.</li> <li><b>March: Last sizable U.S. military units depart South Vietnam</b></li> <li>October: Egypt &amp; Syria attack Israel; Egypt requests Soviet aid</li> <li>November: War Powers Act Passed in US Congress (60-day limit on presidential commitment of US troops to hostilities unless Congress authorizes continued action)</li> <li>End of the U.S. military draft</li> </ul> |
| 1974 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>August: President Nixon resigns</li> </ul>  |
| 1975 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April 30: Saigon falls to North; the end of South Vietnam</li> </ul>  |
| 1978 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iranian Revolution (Islamic fundamentalists led by Ruhollah Khomeini capture the US Embassy in Tehran and held US citizens hostage – hostages not released until 1981)</li> </ul>   |
| 1979 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: SALT II nuclear treaty signed</li> <li>November: Shah of Iran overthrown; Iranian Hostage Crisis</li> </ul>   |

### The Cold War Timeline: 1980's

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1980 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November: Ronald Reagan elected President</li> </ul>                |
| 1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November: Yuri Andropov becomes Soviet leader.</li> </ul>           |
| 1983 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reagan reveals Strategic Defense Initiative, "Star Wars"</li> </ul> |

# UNIT 10

## TIMELINE

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>1984</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February: Konstantin Chernenko becomes Soviet leader</li> <li>March: Mikhail Gorbachev (“Gorby”) ascends to power in USSR</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1985</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perestroika (<i>economic reform</i>) and Glasnost (<i>openness</i>) active policy in USSR</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1986</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorbachev ends economic aid to Soviet satellites</li> <li>Reagan and Gorbachev resolve to remove all intermediate nuclear missiles from Europe</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1987</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October: Reagan and Gorbachev agree to remove all medium and short-range nuclear missiles from Europe by signing treaty (Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1988</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soviets allow Poland to pursue path of self-determination</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1989</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January: Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan</li> <li>June: China puts down protests for democracy</li> <li>June: Poland becomes independent</li> <li>September: Hungary becomes independent</li> <li>November: Berlin Wall falls</li> <li>December: Communist governments fall in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, and Rumania</li> </ul> |
| <b>The Cold War Timeline: 1990’s</b> |  |
| <b>1990</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March: Lithuania becomes independent</li> <li>May 29: Boris Yeltsin elected to presidency of Russia</li> <li>August 2: Iraq invades Kuwait; threatens Saudi Arabia</li> <li>October 3: West Germany and East Germany unite</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1991</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April: Warsaw Pact ends</li> <li>July: Latvia becomes independent</li> <li>August: Estonia becomes independent</li> <li>December: Gorbachev resigns; <b>USSR Dissolved -- Cold War Ends</b></li> </ul>  |
| <b>1992</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commonwealth of Independent States formed under leadership of Boris Yeltsin as head of the Russian Republic</li> </ul>  |

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### Civil Rights in Theme Analysis

The Civil Rights Movement is the most inspiring story of successful grassroots political activism in American history. The last bastion of “states rights” attitudes was in the nation’s, particularly the South’s, active denial of African-American civil rights. The people collectively chose to force the hands of the federal government to use its power to protect the Constitutional rights of Blacks and other minorities. Again, another major change in American attitudes and political practices came from the grassroots.. Facing odds greater than the Populists, Progressives, and most labor unions, Civil Rights Workers met and overcame obstacles to their efforts at every turn, often paying for their struggles with their lives! It literally was a town to town struggle. In the end, along with African-Americans and minorities securing their rights, the nation emerged into a greater human rights consciousness. Albeit it not perfect, the seeds of attitudinal change were planted and have grown. It was after the Civil Rights Movement Era (and the other social changes of the 1960s-1970s) that the U.S. developed a more humanitarian rhetoric in its foreign policy and role as a world leader. The legacy of the movement lives on today.

### Segregation Increases

- Disenfranchisement - blacks lost the right to vote under state laws. Ways done: Poll Tax, Grandfather clause, white primaries, literacy qualifications.
- Segregation - Jim Crow laws were established to bar blacks from the same public places as whites.
- Economically, blacks were forced into share-cropping and tenant farming, which were systems that made it difficult if not impossible to get out of debt and on one’s own.
- Educationally, blacks were segregated, teachers were paid less, supplies were inferior, and states funded black schools less.
- Violence against blacks was commonplace. Mob violence, such as lynching was prevalent. People were hung and tortured for trying to gain rights guaranteed to them in the Constitution.
- Racism grew stronger after the Civil War with the North embracing the Southern stereotypes of blacks and with African-American migrations to the North in the early 20th century.
- Laws and amendments were in place to protect the rights of black Americans, but Southerners ignored or reinterpreted them to deny blacks their rights. 14th Amendment gave blacks citizenship, 15th Amendment guaranteed blacks the right to vote, but was ruled in 1883 by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. The Civil Rights Bill of 1875 prohibited racial discrimination in the selection of juries, on public transportation, and in public facilities. It also prohibited segregation in schools

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and church cemeteries. However it was largely ignored, and blacks were not protected from discrimination.

- Plessy v. Ferguson legalized the segregationist reality, by arguing that separate facilities for blacks were legal if they were equal to those of whites.

### Overview: History of the Early Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement is an inspirational story of individuals facing tremendous odds to change the way society and government operates. The leaders and supporters of the movement understood the political system in America, and by utilizing the court system and peaceful protest, managed to force the hand of the federal government to change the nation's laws. It was true grass roots progressivism in action. The earliest black leaders had different views on how to pursue their rights. Educator, Booker T. Washington, in his 1895 "Atlanta Speech," preached the doctrine of accommodation (Atlanta Compromise) which told blacks to: accept segregation, work hard, be thrifty, live a Christian life, embrace self-help, and prove their usefulness to society. Then, he argued, blacks would have earned their rights as citizens and their Constitutional and social equality. In promoting this agenda, he established the Tuskegee Institute (a black school). Despite his public philosophies, in private, Washington financed court cases to challenge segregation. Opposition to Washington came from

Ida Wells and W.E.B. DuBois who demanded racial equality and civil rights. DuBois started the Niagara Movement in 1905, which demanded racial equality, civil rights, equality in education and job opportunities, and an end to segregation. Later, this organization merged with another to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which though financed initially by white philanthropists, had DuBois on the board of directors and as the Director of Publicity and Research. The organization approached obtaining civil rights via the court system by selecting "test cases" to challenge civil rights violations. The NAACP won cases against or attacked: lynching, discrimination, disenfranchisement, segregation in education, and restrictive covenants, which were agreements between neighbors not to sell homes to minorities OR when minorities reached 40% in a neighborhood the whites would move out. (In 1947, the Supreme Court declared restrictive covenants unconstitutional, but they were still practiced.) The Civil Rights Movement changed after 1949. Before that year, most African-Americans wanted separate but equal to be enforced, but by that year the movement favored desegregation as its main objective. This fact will turn the 1950s into one of the most turbulent decades in American history (despite the myth of the 1950s), as it was during this time and into the 1960s that racial tensions and civil rights activities were at their highest. The movement will see new leaders emerge, such as Martin Luther King, who promoted peaceful protests, sit-ins, boycotts, marches, and other protest methods. Southerners and North-



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erners met these with violence. As government was forced to take action for civil rights, the movement faced changing attitudes in society as a whole. This task frustrated and split the members of the movement. Younger members grew impatient and formed militant groups to protect themselves from attacks and to protest. Overall, the movement achieved the legislative and some of the social changes it sought to make. And, it served as a role-model for other minority groups and for women to follow for gaining their own civil rights in America.

### Post 1949 Civil Rights

In 1950 the ideal image of suburban America was not for everyone. Minorities and certain ethnic groups were excluded from this ideal. Most lived in poverty, segregation, discrimination, and degradation. Blacks were confined to the lowest rungs of American society. However, by 1952 the NAACP had won cases allowing black graduate students the right to attend white colleges, despite separate but equal being intact. The idea of desegregation spread into other areas where blacks were treated inequitably.

**Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Topeka, Kansas:** In this case the NAACP lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, argued that it black students being bused to inferior black schools, despite better quality white schools being closer was wrong. He argued that separate but equal was inherently separate but unequal, because as statistics showed black schools received

less financing, lower quality teachers, and less resources. He also used psychological studies to show that blacks in segregated schools had lower self-esteem issues. The Supreme Court, basing its ruling on the 14th amendment, said that school segregation was illegal and provided for ways to enforce the desegregation of public schools. The South cried out that they would resist all efforts to desegregate and drag their feet integrating blacks despite the Supreme Court ordering that it be done with “all deliberate speed.” By 1965 only 2 % of American schools were integrated. The reaction of whites, told Civil Rights leaders that all efforts to undo the racist traditions within the United States would be met with strong opposition and violence.

**Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955) Montgomery, Alabama:** The NAACP had been looking for a test case to challenge inter and intra state transportation segregation. In 1942 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) formed with the goal of getting public facilities integrated) and had some successes in the North. In 1946, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in transportation was illegal. However, Montgomery, Alabama, still used “Rolling Segregation.” To challenge this, the NAACP encouraged Rosa Parks to refuse to give up her seat, as per the laws of the city. She was arrested, and the NAACP took the case to the Supreme Court. In the interim, the black community in Montgomery called for a boycott of the city’s transportation networks, if the city officials did not respond to three main demands: a) the hiring

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of courteous bus drivers b) the hiring of black drivers c) equitable seating. The community chose a young, dynamic, and not too well-known man, Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead the boycott. His philosophy of non-violence and belief that the church had the responsibility to fight social injustice made him very popular. On December 6th, Rosa Parks was found guilty and fined \$14.00. Parks appealed, and the boycott began. Using alternative methods of transportation blacks boycotted the city's transportation systems for over year. Whites reacted with violence against the black's peaceful means of protest. Finally, in 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that the city's and bus company's segregation policy was unconstitutional. The 381 day boycott proved to be a very effective means of incurring change. The results of the boycott were significant. First, the white view that blacks accepted and preferred segregation was shattered. Second, King emerged as the leader of the American Civil Rights Movement, and he formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1956. Third, African-Americans around the country relied upon the methods used in *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Montgomery Bus Boycott to further their own struggles for desegregation.

**Little Rock, Arkansas (1957):** Eisenhower was not in favor of the federal government taking a role in integration, but this incident forced him into taking action. Desegregation was to be implemented in a white high school in Little Rock. The governor called out the National Guard to prevent it from happening. For

three weeks the Guard remained and kept the 9 black students out of school. On September 20th a federal judge ordered the integration of Central High and for the governor to withdraw the National Guard. On the 23rd, the 9 students slipped into the school away from a mob, which rushed police lines and called for the students to be lynched. Eisenhower then nationalized the Arkansas National Guard and dispatched 1,000 troops of the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock. This action told the nation that the federal government was willing to use force to integrate and uphold the law. The National Guard stayed for the remainder of the school year to protect the students. The following year (1957-58) the governor closed the high school in order to avoid integration. To prevent such extra-legal actions, the Supreme Court ruled in 1959 in *Cooper v. Aaron* that the right of blacks to attend integrated schools could not be nullified openly or directly by states nor indirectly through evasive schemes for segregation. The high school was re-opened, and integration started at the lower grades as well. However, white parents reacted by putting their children into private schools, beyond the reach of the federal government.

### **Civil Rights and President John F. Kennedy**

**(JFK):** During the 1960 presidential campaign Kennedy ran on a platform of "moral leadership" and action in Civil Rights. However, once in office he moved cautiously on Civil Rights. He appointed several blacks, such as Thurgood Marshall, to high offices and district courts. But, without immediate

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Civil Rights legislation, as promised, Civil Rights leaders grew discontent and put forth other efforts to end segregation, such as sit-ins and boycotts. It was not until November of 1962 that JFK banned segregation in federal housing and not until 1963 that a Civil Rights bill was forthcoming.

**Greensboro, North Carolina (1960):** Efforts were made, such as this one, to end segregation at the local level. In this case, four college freshmen decided to force the integration of a lunch counter at the local Woolworth store. On February 1st, 1960 the students ordered a meal, and the black waitress told them that she could not serve them. The four sat in protest and were harassed. The store closed, and the next day 20 students showed up and demanded service. By the end of the week similar sit ins had spread throughout the South, and the efforts of these average people had made a tremendous difference in integration at the local level.

**Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (1961):** was formed in 1961 to organize protest activities, like sit-ins. 70,000 people will protest for the integration of public facilities in more than 140 cities. Most of the participants were college students. In some cities, changes came about more readily, but in others protesters were beaten and jailed, especially in the Deep South

**Freedom Riders (1961):** Before President Kennedy came into office, the Supreme Court ruled in



*Little Rock (source: iipdigital.usembassy.gov)*

1961 that all interstate bus and train terminals had to be desegregated. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) planned a series of “freedom rides” to force the integration of bus terminals, not complying with the law. James Farmer led the movement and anticipated that a crisis would result, which would then force the federal government to get involved. The buses left in May of 1961 and traveled from Washington D.C. to Alabama and Mississippi. All along the way, they were met with resistance. The governor of Alabama said that integration would come over his dead body, while in Anniston, Alabama a mob attacked a bus, smashing windows, setting it on fire, and beating the freedom riders. In Birmingham and Montgomery, the police did not keep the peace at the bus stations. The Freedom Riders called for help from the Justice Department to protect them as they journeyed through Alabama. The Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, federalized the local authorities and

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ordered them to escort the riders to Mississippi. Once there, local forces arrested the riders under public order laws, which were passed specifically to stop the freedom riders, by making it possible for the police to arrest anyone even suspected of intending to disrupt the public order. Finally in 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission agreed to uphold the Supreme Court's ruling on the desegregation of the terminals. Faced with direct federal involvement, most state and local authorities accepted the integration of the terminals, albeit begrudgingly.

**James Meredith (1962):** In 1962, Meredith (an Air Force Vet and college student) transferred to the University of Mississippi, knowing that Governor Ross Barnett had vowed to go to jail before allowing blacks to enroll. Once again, R. Kennedy, as Attorney General, got involved and sent 500 federal marshals to guard Meredith. The show of force did not prevent violence, as thousands of whites (students and non-students) attacked the marshals and Meredith. Two people were killed and 166 marshals were wounded. 5,000 Army troops arrived and restored order. Protected by federal forces, Meredith finished the year and became the first black graduate of the University of Mississippi.

**Birmingham, Alabama (1963):** The city of Birmingham had been particularly resistant to overturning segregation. King and his SCLC decided to take action through economic boycotts of segregated businesses and protest marches. The hope was to gain

national support by drawing attention to the white reaction to their protests. On Good Friday 1963, King led the first march and was arrested. From his jail cell he penned the infamous letter calling for immediate and continued civil disobedience called the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." This was smuggled out of jail and widely publicized. On May 3rd, the peaceful protesters encountered mayor, "Bull" Connor's police and violence erupted. As a result, many Birmingham businesses agreed to hire black salespeople, but the violence did not end. President Kennedy ordered 3,000 troops to Birmingham to maintain order and uphold integration.

**March on Washington (1963):** In an effort to pressure Congress to pass the Civil Rights Bill, a quarter of a million protesters marched on D.C.. It was at this time that King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech to the largest crowd ever assembled on Washington. As a result, the Civil Rights Act became law on July 2, 1964. The law made it illegal to discriminate for reasons of race, religion, or gender (women had to fight for gender to be included in the bill) in places and businesses that served the public. The law also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee and gave the executive branch the power to withhold federal money from institutions violating the act.

**Voting Rights and Freedom Summer (1964):** Despite the gains made by the Civil Rights movement, voting equality was still a major issue in many states.

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Mississippi was notorious for trying to prohibit blacks from voting. In the summer of 1964, Bob Moses and SNCC organized a campaign to establish “freedom schools” in the South which taught basic literacy, black history and achievements, how to pass the Mississippi voter literacy test, interpretations of the Constitution. Whites reacted with more violence. Almost on a daily basis there were shootings and bombings against freedom workers. Six were murdered and hundreds were beaten and arrested. All of this culminated in the Freedom March in Selma, Alabama in 1965. Selma was targeted by the Civil Rights workers because Sheriff Jim Clark was vehemently against integration. Marchers were met with tremendous violence, as Selma police fired tear gas and whipped protesters with rubber hoses wrapped in barbed wire. Television news showed this to the nation, and LBJ reacted, telling Governor Wallace that the federal government would not tolerate interference with the march. LBJ used the violence in Selma to push Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which ended literacy and other voting tests, and authorized federal supervision of voter registration in places where such tests had been in use.

### Changes in the Civil Rights Movement

**Problems:** As the Civil Rights movement made gains in the South, supporters realized that racism and discrimination in the North also was a problem in society. Northern social customs and racism kept

blacks as second-class citizens. Segregation occurred in education, housing, and employment, but not as flagrantly as in the South. This fact made fighting for Civil Rights in the North a challenge. For example, in education, 90% of Black students in Chicago attended predominantly black schools. It was not until 1973 that federal courts extended the desegregation that had started in the South to the rest of the nation. It was the fight against racism in the North that fractured the Civil Rights movement. The split ran along generational lines with the younger element turning away from gradualism and non-violent approaches to immediate and violent and radical methods. King and others did not support this trend within the movement.

**Black Separatism:** Separatism existed in the 1920s under the leadership of Marcus Garvey, and was revived in the 1960s. The Nation of Islam, originally founded in the 1930s, by the 1960s had grown to a membership of 10,000. Elijah Mohammed was the leader. The Black Muslims, as they were called, went into prisons and encouraged inmates to take control of their lives by adopting a strict code of personal behavior, converting to Islam, abandoning the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and embracing black nationalism and pride through unity and self-help principles. The group was openly hostile to whites who were labeled, “blue-eyed devils.” The most charismatic figure was Malcolm Little (Malcolm X) who converted while in prison for burglary. Malcolm X was a brilliant speaker and debater, who preached a philosophy in contradiction to King’s. He advocated separatism



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and militant protest. In 1964, he broke with Mohammed after a pilgrimage to Mecca (the holy city of Islam) and founded the Organ of Afro-American Unity, in which he moved away from anti-white rhetoric and prompted an internationalist vision of black unity. In February of 1965 he was assassinated in Harlem by three members of the Nation of Islam.

**Black Power:** For the new generation of Civil Rights activists the Black Power movement replaced SNCC and CORE. The Black Power movement maintained the same militant stand of the Nation of Islam, but did not require conversion to Islam for membership. It was the secular version of the Nation of Islam. The Black Power movement led to many changes within the major Civil Rights organizations. For example, CORE banned whites from leadership positions. Stokely Carmichael in 1966 ushered in a new era of the Black Power movement by confirming that militant wings existed. By 1966 most whites had been cast out of such Civil Rights organizations.

**Black Panthers:** The Black Panthers were formed in 1966 in Oakland California by college students who had grown tired of racially motivated, police beatings of blacks. Harry Newton and Bobby Seal promoted active self-defense and pro-active violence against white authorities. The Panthers' influence spread to other communities, and the organization promoted Afro-American unity via community service projects.



*Black Power (source: [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk))*

**White Reactions:** White responses to the changes in the Civil Rights movement were violent. White Americans were essentially ready for the reforms of the 50s and 60s, but were not ready for the more sophisticated and subtle racial attitude changes the Civil Rights movement was trying to make in the late 60s and 70s. This led to race riots through out the country. The riots started in 1964 and lasted through to the assassination of King on April 4, 1968. The most famous riot was the Watts Riot in California.

## Other Minorities

### Women's Rights Movement:

Most of the early history of the Women's Rights Movement (19<sup>th</sup> century-1920) was spent in an effort to acquire the vote. The movement though also has had a long history of pushing for equality for women in terms of: working conditions, health care/medical research, educational opportunities, pay, reproductive rights, and treatment in the courts and in the military. After the right to vote was achieved,

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the women's rights movement turned its attention to many of these issues, particularly in the 1960s. From the 1920s through the 1950s, women in the workplace increased, and during the Great Depression saw many households with female breadwinners. However, through the early 1960s, gender expectations were clearly set (particularly by the media) that the ideal role for woman was as a homemaker in a home where father "knew best" and provided the most.

The League of Women Voters formed after the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and focused mainly on political education and participation by women. The National Women's Party proposed the Equal Rights Amendment for the first time in 1923. Though it was not successful, women were entering higher education and getting government jobs in greater numbers in the years following the vote. Still no strong, national organization existed to take on the remaining civil rights issues that women faced. By the 1960s, though, Betty Friedan, author of the *Feminine Mystique* – a book which dispelled the myth that all women were most satisfied in life by the prescribed roles of housewife and mother, led the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW).

**Spurred by the achievements of other civil rights movements, NOW fought for many of the aforementioned issues for women. Names like Friedan, Aileen Hernandez, Wilma Scott Heide, Jean Witter, and Gloria Steinem (founder of Ms. Magazine). Some of the biggest pieces of legislation**

**impacting women that NOW and other women's groups supported included: Equal Pay Act (1963), Title IX (1972) which banned sex discrimination in federally funded schools, Roe v Wade which ruled legalization of some forms of abortion (1973), and the Family and Medical Leave Act (1993).**

### Hispanic-Americans:

Due to a history of working as migrant laborers, in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hispanic-Americans were of the first to organize agricultural labor unions, along with Asian-Americans in the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (1903). Others, such as Federation of Mexican Workers Union, followed in the 1920s, with strikes and protests in the 1930s. The biggest issues facing Hispanic-Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was employment discrimination and immigration/deportation. By the 1960s, bilingual education also was a rising issue, and civil rights/workers' rights activism hit a high point with the efforts of Cesar Chavez's and Dolores Huerta's leadership of the United Farm Workers. In 1965, the UFW led the Grape Boycott, which became one of the largest agricultural industry-related movements in the country's history and led to farmers signing fair-labor contracts with agricultural workers. Taking cues from the African-American Civil Rights Movement, the Young Lords Organization (1969) formed in Chicago, working for Hispanic-American communities and civil rights in cities throughout America. Education continued to be an important civil rights issue for Hispanic-Americans, and in *Louv. Nichols* (1974) the

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U.S. Supreme Court ordered that students could not be denied an education due to an inability to speak English.

### **Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders:**

Due to a history of working as low-paid agricultural labor, in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Asian-Americans were of the first to organize in an agricultural labor union, along with Hispanic-Americans in the Japanese-Mexican American Association (1903). In particular in the 1920s, Asian-Americans saw themselves banned from citizenship due to a combination of Supreme Court cases and legislation. Most famously, the Immigration Act of 1924 denied citizenship to Asian Americans and specifically banned all Asians from coming to the US. Principles of separate but equal were applied to Asian-Americans in schooling, too, during this time. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Asian-Americans faced additional discrimination, violence, and harassment, and Japanese-Americans were interned in camps. After the war, the camps closed, and Japanese war-brides of American GI's were allowed to enter the country, though they faced discrimination and rejection once in the US. Once Hawaii became a state in 1959, Pacific Islanders were able to run for national office. In 1962, Hawaii sent its first native islanders to both the House ('Spark' Matsunaga) and Senate (Daniel Inouye). In 1965 restrictions on Asians entering the country were lifted, and the 1967 famous court case, *Loving v. Virginia*, interracial marriages were legalized. In the late 1960s, in California, stu-

dents protested to get Asian-American history brought into the curriculum and won. The Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund was established in 1974, and in 1975 with the fall of South Vietnam to the communist, North Vietnam, Vietnamese and other refugees came to America. The refugees faced discrimination and violence. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund backed court cases throughout the US to fight against and help end discrimination.

### **Arab-Americans:**

The first generation of Arab-Americans came to the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the earliest immigrants from the Middle East were Christians, but over time Muslim populations also entered the US. Early on, most Arab immigrants worked in shops in major cities, but throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century a greater number entered the professions. Global events in the 1970s through 2001 led to racial profiling and greater discrimination against Muslim-Americans in particular. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee was founded by James Abourezk in 1980 and has been the largest Arab-American civil rights organization in the US. The Arab-American Civil Rights League has addressed the status and treatment of Arab-Americans in the United States since 9-11.

### **Jewish-Americans:**

Jewish peoples have been part of the North American cultural landscape since the Colonial Era, who were

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particularly drawn to the cities of New England and the Middle Colonies. One of the first synagogues in the US was the Touro Synagogue founded in 1763 in Newport, Rhode Island. Jewish-Americans were deeply entrenched in the activism of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. The American Jewish Congress (1918/1953) and the American Jewish Committee (1906) have stood up for the legal and civil rights of Jewish Americans since the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Intersex, Asexual):**

During the 1920s, society became slightly tolerant of the gay and lesbian community. Films and music sometimes made reference to gay men, in particular. But, mostly the LGBT community remained in the margins of society, and most people did not live that aspect of their lives openly. The 1950s, a time when the media upheld the white, middle-class, nuclear family as the ideal norm in society, though saw an increase in awareness of one LGBT issue with the first successful sex-change operation in 1952 of Christine Jorgensen. During the 1950s, the FBI kept lists with the names of homosexuals, and often people who were “outed” against their will lost employment, and the Post Office even tracked to where homosexual-themed literature and mailings were going. In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association labeled homosexuality as a mental disorder, and doctors sometimes used barbaric treatments (e.g. electro-shock) on persons struggling with their identities in relationship to society at the time. Mostly though, it

was not until the 1960s and 1970s that LGBT individuals lived more publicly and LGBT civil rights organizations and campaigns drew national attention. The most famous organizations affiliated with the history of this movement are: the Daughters of Bilitis founded by Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin in San Francisco in 1955 with the aim of supporting lesbian communities, the Mattachine Society founded by Harry Hay in Los Angeles in 1950 to create community support via discussion groups and publications for gays, the Gay Liberation Front organized on college campuses throughout the 1970s, the Gay-Straight Alliances formed for students in the 1980s, the Student Homophile League formed as a students’ civil rights organization at Columbia University in the 1960s and spread to other campuses nationally, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) formed in 1978, and Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) formed in 1985. The most famous event in LGBTQIA history was the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, New York City in June of 1969. Several days of violence in reaction to police raids and brutality against homosexuals within the city resulted. On the heels of the Stonewall Riots the Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activists Alliance, and Gay Pride movements formed.

### **Legacies of the Civil Rights Movement**

- Martin Luther King was the only major Civil Rights Leader able to stir white America’s consciousness. 1986 his birthday became a holiday.

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- The 1950s-60s brought permanent changes in American race relations. For example, Jim Crow legislation was overturned, and federal legislation ensured African-Americans their basic rights.
- The enfranchisement of blacks in the South ended the white Democratic control of the South, and allowed for black candidates to enter politics.
- The movement taught other groups how to pursue the guarantee of their rights and was the role-model for the women's movement, AIM, and other groups.
- Affirmative Action legislation resulted in the 1970s to ensure fair employment practices.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*



# THE AMERICAN YAWP

## THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

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*Abandoned Packard Automotive Plant in Detroit, Michigan. Via [Wikimedia](#).*

### I. Introduction

In 1958, Harvard economist and public intellectual John Kenneth Galbraith published *The Affluent Society*. Galbraith's celebrated book examined America's new post-World War II consumer economy and political culture. The book, which popularized phrases such as "conventional wisdom," noted the unparalleled riches of American economic growth but criticized the underlying structures of an economy dedicated to increasing production and the consumption of goods. Galbraith argued that the United States' economy, based on an almost hedonistic consumption of luxury products, would and must inevitably lead to economic inequality as the private sector interests enriched

themselves at the expense of the American public. Galbraith warned that an economy where "wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied," was unsound, unsustainable, and, ultimately, immoral. "The Affluent Society," he said, was anything but.

The contradictions that Galbraith noted mark the decade of the 1950s. While economists and scholars continue to debate the merits of Galbraith's warnings and predictions, his analysis was so insightful that the title of his book has come to serve as a ready label for postwar American society. In the almost two decades after the end of World War II, the American economy witnessed massive and sustained growth that reshaped

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## THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

American culture through the abundance of consumer goods. Standards of living climbed to unparalleled heights. All income levels shared and inequality plummeted in what some economists have called “the Great Compression.”

And yet, as Galbraith noted, the Affluent Society had fundamental flaws. The new consumer economy that lifted millions of Americans into its burgeoning middle class also produced inequality. Women struggled to claim equal rights as full participants in American society. The poor struggled to win access to good schools, good healthcare, and good jobs. The same suburbs that gave middle class Americans new space left cities withering in spirals of poverty and crime. The Jim Crow South tenaciously defended segregation and American blacks and other minorities suffered discrimination all across the country.

The contradictions of the Affluent Society defined the decade: unrivaled prosperity with crippling poverty, expanded opportunity with entrenched discrimination, and new lifestyles with stifling conformity.

### III. Race and Education

Older battles over racial exclusion also confronted postwar American society. One long-simmering struggle targeted segregated schooling. Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), black Americans, particularly in the American South, had fully felt the deleterious effects of segregated edu-



School desegregation was a tense experience for all involved, but none more so than the African American students brought into white schools. The “Little Rock Nine” were the first to do this in Arkansas; their escorts, the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, provided protection to these students who so bravely took that first step. Photograph, 1957. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:101st\\_Airborne\\_at\\_Little\\_Rock\\_Central\\_High.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:101st_Airborne_at_Little_Rock_Central_High.jpg).

cation. Their battle against *Plessy* for inclusion in American education stretched across half a century when the Supreme Court again took up the merits of “separate but equal.”

On May 17, 1954, after two years of argument, re-argument, and deliberation, Chief Justice Earl Warren announced the Supreme Court’s decision on segregated schooling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The court found by a unanimous 9-0 vote that racial segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court’s decision declared, “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” “Separate but equal” was made unconstitutional.

Decades of African American-led litigation, local agitation against racial inequality, and liberal Supreme Court justices made *Brown v.*

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*Board* possible. In the early 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began a concerted effort to erode the legal underpinnings of segregation in the American South. Legal, or *de jure*, segregation subjected racial minorities to discriminatory laws and policies. Law and custom in the South hardened anti-black restrictions. But through a series of carefully chosen and contested court cases concerning education, disfranchisement, and jury selection, NAACP lawyers such as Charles Hamilton Houston, Robert L. Clark, and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall undermined Jim Crow's constitutional underpinnings. Initially seeking to demonstrate that states systematically failed to provide African American students "equal" resources and facilities, and thus failed to live up to *Plessy*, by the late 1940s activists began to more forcefully challenge the assumptions that "separate" was constitutional at all.

Though remembered as just one lawsuit, *Brown* consolidated five separate cases that had originated in the southeastern United States: *Briggs v. Elliott* (South Carolina), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (Virginia), *Beulah v. Belton* (Delaware), *Boiling v. Sharpe* (Washington, D. C.), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (Kansas). Working with local activists already involved in desegregation fights, the NAACP purposely chose cases with a diverse set of local backgrounds to show that segregation was not just an issue in the



The NAACP was a central organization in the fight to end segregation, discrimination, and injustice based on race. NAACP leaders, including Thurgood Marshall (who would become the first African American Supreme Court Justice), hold a poster decrying racial bias in Mississippi in 1956. Photograph, 1956. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99401448/>.

Deep South, and that a sweeping judgment on the fundamental constitutionality of *Plessy* was needed.

*Briggs v. Elliott*, the first case accepted by the NAACP, illustrated the plight of segregated black schools. *Briggs* originated in rural Clarendon County, South Carolina, where taxpayers in 1950 spent \$179 to educate each white student and \$43 for each black student. The district's twelve white schools were cumulatively worth \$673,850; the value of its sixty-one black schools (mostly dilapidated, over-crowded shacks), was \$194,575. While *Briggs* underscored the South's failure to follow *Plessy*, the *Brown v. Board* suit focused less on material disparities between black and white schools (which were significantly less than in places like Clarendon County) and more on the social and spiritual

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degradation that accompanied legal segregation. This case cut to the basic question of whether or not “separate” was itself inherently unequal. The NAACP said the two notions were incompatible. As one witness before the U. S. District Court of Kansas said, “the entire colored race is craving light, and the only way to reach the light is to start [black and white] children together in their infancy and they come up together.”

To make its case, the NAACP marshalled historical and social scientific evidence. The Court found the historical evidence inconclusive, and drew their ruling more heavily from the NAACP’s argument that segregation psychologically damaged black children. To make this argument, association lawyers relied upon social scientific evidence, such as the famous doll experiments of Kenneth and Mamie Clark. The Clarks demonstrated that while young white girls would naturally choose to play with white dolls, young black girls would, too. The Clarks argued that black children’s aesthetic and moral preference for white dolls demonstrated the pernicious effects and self-loathing produced by segregation.

Identifying and denouncing injustice, though, is different from rectifying it. Though *Brown* repudiated *Plessy*, the Court’s orders did not extend to segregation in places other than public schools and, even then, while recognizing the historical importance of the decision, the justices set aside the divisive yet essential question of

remediation and enforcement to preserve a unanimous decision. Their infamously ambiguous order in 1955 (what came to be known as *Brown II*) that school districts desegregate “with all deliberate speed” was so vague and ineffectual that it left the actual business of desegregation in the hands of those who opposed it.

In most of the South, as well as the rest of the country, school integration did not occur on a wide scale until well after *Brown*. Only in the 1964 Civil Rights Act did the federal government finally implement some enforcement of the *Brown* decision by threatening to withhold funding from recalcitrant school districts, financially compelling desegregation, but even then southern districts found loopholes. Court decisions such as *Green v. New Kent County* (1968) and *Alexander v. Holmes* (1969) finally closed some of those loopholes, such as “freedom of choice” plans, to compel some measure of actual integration.

When *Brown* finally was enforced in the South, the quantitative impact was staggering. In the early 1950s, virtually no southern black students attended white schools. By 1968, fourteen years after *Brown*, some eighty percent of black southerners remained in schools that were ninety- to one-hundred-percent nonwhite. By 1972, though, just twenty-five percent were in such schools, and fifty-five percent remained in schools with a simple nonwhite minority. By many measures, the public schools of the South became, ironically, the most integrated in the nation.



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As a landmark moment in American history, *Brown*'s significance perhaps lies less in what immediate tangible changes it wrought in African American life—which were slow, partial, and inseparable from a much longer chain of events—than in the idealism it expressed and the momentum it created. The nation's highest court had attacked one of the fundamental supports of Jim Crow segregation and offered constitutional cover for the creation of one of the greatest social movements in American history.

### IV. Civil Rights in an Affluent Society

Education was but one aspect of the nation's Jim Crow machinery. African Americans had been fighting against a variety of racist policies, cultures and beliefs in all aspects of American life. And while the struggle for black inclusion had few victories before World War II, the war and the “Double V” campaign as well as the postwar economic boom led to rising expectations for many African Americans. When persistent racism and racial segregation undercut the promise of economic and social mobility, African Americans began mobilizing on an unprecedented scale against the various discriminatory social and legal structures.

While many of the civil rights movement's most memorable and important moments, such as the sit-ins freedom rides and especially the March on Washington, occurred in the 1960s, the 1950s



*Segregation extended beyond private business property; this segregated drinking fountain was located on the ground of the Halifax county courthouse in North Carolina. Photograph, April 1938. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregation_1938b.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregation\\_1938b.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregation_1938b.jpg).*

were a significant decade in the sometimes-tragic, sometimes-triumphant march of civil rights in the United States. In 1953, years before Rosa Parks' iconic confrontation on a Montgomery city bus, an African American woman named Sarah Keys publicly challenged segregated public transportation. Keys, then serving in the Women's Army Corps, traveled from her army base in New Jersey back to North Carolina to visit her family. When the bus stopped in North Carolina, the driver asked her to give up her seat for a white customer. Her refusal to do so landed her in jail in 1953 and led to a landmark 1955 decision, *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company*, in which the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that “separate but equal” violated the Interstate Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Poorly enforced, it nevertheless gave legal coverage for the freedom riders years later and motivated further assaults against Jim Crow.



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But if some events encouraged civil rights workers with the promise of progress, others were so savage they convinced activists that they could do nothing but resist. In the summer of 1955, two white men in Mississippi kidnapped and brutally murdered a fourteen-year-old boy Emmett Till. Till, visiting from Chicago and perhaps unfamiliar with the etiquette of Jim Crow, allegedly whistled at a white woman named Carolyn Bryant. Her husband, Roy Bryant, and another man, J.W. Milam, abducted Till from his relatives' home, beat him, mutilated him, shot him, and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River. But the body was found. Emmett's mother held an open-casket funeral so that Till's disfigured body could make national news. The men were brought to trial. The evidence was damning, but an all-white jury found the two not guilty. Only months after the decision the two boasted of their crime in *Look* magazine. For young black men and women soon to propel the civil rights movement, the Till case was an indelible lesson.

On December 1, 1955, four months after Till's death and six days after the *Keys v. Carolina Coach Company* decision, Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery city bus and was arrested. Montgomery's public transportation system had longstanding rules requiring African American passengers to sit in the back of the bus and to give up their seats to white passengers if the buses filled. Parks was not the first to protest the



*New inventions to make housework easier and more fun for women proliferated in the post-war era, creating an advertising and marketing frenzy to attract female consumers to certain products. <http://envisioningtheamericandream.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/housewives-chores.jpg>.*

policy by staying seated, but she was the first around whom Montgomery activists rallied.

Montgomery's black population, under the leadership of a recently arrived, twenty-six-year-old Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr., formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and coordinated an organized boycott of the city's buses. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted from December 1955 until December 20, 1956, when the Supreme Court ordered their integration. The boycott not only crushed segregation in Montgomery's public transportation, it energized the entire civil rights movement and established the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Motivated by the success of the Montgomery boycott, King and other African American leaders looked to continue the fight. In 1957, King helped create the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

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to coordinate civil rights groups across the South and buoy their efforts organizing and sustaining boycotts, protests, and other assaults against southern Jim Crow laws.

As pressure built, congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first such measure passed since Reconstruction. The act was compromised away nearly to nothing, although it did achieve some gains, such as creating the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Commission, which was charged with investigating claims of racial discrimination. And yet, despite its weakness, the Act signaled that pressure was finally mounting on Americans to confront the legacy of discrimination.

Despite successes at both the local and national level, the civil rights movement faced bitter opposition. Those opposed to the movement often used violent tactics to scare and intimidate African Americans and subvert legal rulings and court orders. For example, a year into the Montgomery bus boycott, angry white southerners bombed four African American churches as well as the homes of King and fellow civil rights leader E. D. Nixon. Though King, Nixon and the MIA persevered in the face of such violence, it was only a taste of things to come. Such unrelenting hostility and violence left the outcome of the burgeoning civil rights movement in doubt. Despite its successes, civil rights activists looked back on the 1950s as a decade of at best mixed results and incomplete accomplishments. While the bus boycott, Supreme Court rulings

and other civil rights activities signaled progress, church bombings, death threats, and stubborn legislators demonstrated the distance that still needed to be traveled.

## V. Gender and Culture in the Affluent Society

America's consumer economy reshaped how Americans experienced culture and shaped their identities. The Affluent Society gave Americans new experiences, new outlets, and new ways to understand and interact with one another.

"The American household is on the threshold of a revolution," the *New York Times* declared in August 1948. "The reason is television." A distinct post-war phenomenon, television was actually several years in the making before it transformed postwar American culture. Presented to the American public at New York World's Fair in 1939, the commercialization of television in the United States lagged during the war year. In 1947, though, regular full-scale broadcasting became available to the public.

Television was instantly popular, so much so that by early 1948 *Newsweek* reported that it was "catching on like a case of high-toned scarlet fever." Indeed, between 1948 and 1955 close to two-thirds of the nation's households purchased a television set. By the end of the 1950s, 90 percent of American families had one and the average viewer was tuning in for almost 5 hours a day.

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The technological ability to transmit images via radio waves gave birth to television. Television borrowed radio's organizational structure, too. The big radio broadcasting companies, NBC, CBS, and ABC, used their technical expertise and capital reserves to conquer the airwaves. They acquired licenses to local stations and eliminated their few independent competitors. The Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) refusal to issue any new licenses between 1948 and 1955 was a de facto endorsement of the big three's stranglehold on the market.

In addition to replicating radio's organizational structure, television also looked to radio for content. Many of the early programs were adaptations of popular radio variety and comedy shows, including the *Ed Sullivan Show* and *Milton Berle's Texaco Star Theater*. These were accompanied by live plays, dramas, sports, and situation comedies. Due to the cost and difficulty of recording, most programs were broadcast live, forcing stations across the country to air shows at the same time. And since audiences had a limited number of channels to choose from, viewing experiences were broadly shared. Upwards of two thirds of television-owning households, for instance, watched popular shows such as *I Love Lucy*.

The limited number of channels and programs meant that networks selected programs that appealed to the widest possible audience to draw viewers and,



Advertising began creeping up everywhere in the 1950s. No longer confined to commercials or newspapers, advertisements were subtly (or not so subtly in this case) worked into TV shows like the Quiz Show "21". (Geritol is a dietary supplement.) Orlando Fernandez, "[Quiz show "21" host Jack Barry turns toward contestant Charles Van Doren as fellow contestant Vivienne Nearine looks on]," 1957. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652124/>.

more importantly, television's greatest financiers: advertisers. By the mid-1950s, an hour of primetime programming cost about \$150,000 (about \$1.5 million in today's dollars) to produce. This proved too expensive for most commercial sponsors, who began turning to a joint financing model of 30-second spot ads. The commercial need to appeal to as many people as possible promoted the production of shows aimed at the entire family. Programs such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* featured light topics, humor, and a guaranteed happy ending the whole family could enjoy.

Television's broad appeal, however, was about more than money and entertainment. Shows of the 1950s, such as *Father Knows Best* and *I Love Lucy*,

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idealized the nuclear family, “traditional” gender roles, and white, middle-class domesticity. *Leave It to Beaver*, which became the prototypical example of the 1950s’ television family, depicted its breadwinner-father and homemaker-mother guiding their children through life lessons. Such shows, and Cold War America more broadly, reflected a popular consensus that such lifestyles were not only beneficial, but the most effective way to safeguard American prosperity against communist threats and social “deviancy.”

The marriage of the suburban consumer culture and Cold War security concerns facilitated, and in turn was supported by, the ongoing postwar baby boom. From 1946 to 1964, American fertility experienced an unprecedented spike. A century of declining birth rates abruptly reversed. Although popular memory credits the cause of the baby boom to the return of virile soldiers from battle, the real story is more nuanced. After years of economic depression families were now wealthy enough to support larger families and had homes large enough to accommodate them, while women married younger and American culture celebrated the ideal of a large, insular family.

Underlying this “reproductive consensus” was the new cult of professionalism that pervaded postwar American culture, including the professionalization of homemaking. Mothers and fathers alike flocked to the experts for their opinions on marriage, sexuality, and, most especially, child-rearing. Psychiatrists held an



*Rock and roll music was seen by many as devilish, having a corruptive influence on the youth of America. Chuck Berry defined the rhythm and style that made rock and roll so distinctive and irresistible. Publicity photo, c. 1971. [Wikimedia](#).*

almost mythic status as people took their opinions and prescriptions, as well as their vocabulary, into their everyday life. Books like Dr. Spock’s *Baby and Child Care* (1946) were diligently studied by women who took their careers as house-wife as just that: a career, complete with all the demands and professional trappings of job development and training. And since most women had multiple children roughly the same age as their neighbors’ children, a cultural obsession with kids flourished throughout the decade. Women bore the brunt of this pressure, chided if they did not give enough of their time to the children—especially



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if it was at the expense of a career—yet cautioned that spending too much time would lead to “Momism,” producing “sissy” boys who would be incapable of contributing to society and extremely susceptible to the communist threat.

A new youth culture exploded in American popular culture. On the one hand, the anxieties of the atomic age hit America’s youth particularly hard. Keenly aware of the discontent bubbling beneath the surface of the Affluent Society, for instance, many youth embraced rebellion. The 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause* demonstrated the restlessness and emotional incertitude of the postwar generation raised in increasing affluence yet increasingly unsatisfied with their comfortably lives. At the same time, perhaps yearning for something beyond the “massification” of American culture yet having few other options to turn to beyond popular culture, American youth embraced rock ‘n’ roll. They listened to Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and especially Elvis Presley (whose sexually suggestive hip movements were judged subversive).

The popularity of rock and roll, which emerged in the postwar years, had not yet blossomed into the countercultural musical revolution of the coming decade, but it provided a magnet for teenage restlessness and rebellion. “Television and Elvis,” the musician Bruce Springsteen would recollect, “gave us full access to a new language, a new form of communication, a new way of being, a new way of looking, a new way of thinking; about sex, about



*While black musicians like Chuck Berry created Rock and Roll, it was brought into the mainstream (white) American culture through performers like Elvis. His good looks, sensual dancing, and sonorous voice stole the hearts of millions of American teenage girls, which was at that moment becoming a central segment of the consumer population. [Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Elvis\\_Presley\\_Jailhouse\\_Rock.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Elvis_Presley_Jailhouse_Rock.jpg).*

race, about identity, about life; a new way of being an American, a human being; and a new way of hearing music.” American youth had seen so little of Elvis’ energy and sensuality elsewhere in their culture. “Once Elvis came across the airwaves,” Springsteen said, “once he was heard and seen in action, you could not put the genie back in the bottle. After that moment, there was yesterday, and there was today, and there was a red hot, rockabilly forging of a new tomorrow, before your very eyes.”



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Other Americans took larger steps to reject the expected conformity of the Affluent Society.

The writers and poets and musicians of the Beat Generation, disillusioned with capitalism, consumerism, and traditional gender roles, sought a deeper meaning in life. Beats traveled across the country, studied Eastern religions, and experimented with drugs and sex and art.

Behind the scenes, Americans were challenging sexual mores. The gay rights movement, for instance, stretched back into the Affluent Society. While the country proclaimed homosexuality a mental disorder, gay men established the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles and gay women formed the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco as support groups. They held meetings, distributed literature, provided legal and counseling services, and formed chapters across the country. Much of their work, however, remained secretive because homosexuals risked arrest and abuse, if discovered.

Society's "consensus," on everything from the consumer economy to gender roles, did not go unchallenged. Much discontent was channeled through the machine itself: advertisers sold rebellion no less than they sold baking soda. And yet others were rejecting the old ways, choosing new lifestyles, challenging old hierarchies, and embarking upon new paths.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

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## THE SIXTIES



*“Participants, some carrying American flags, marching in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965,” via [Library of Congress](#).*

### I. Introduction

Perhaps no decade is so immortalized in American memory as the 1960s. Couched in the colorful rhetoric of peace and love, complemented by stirring images of the civil rights movement, and fondly remembered for its music, art, and activism, for many the decade brought hopes for a more inclusive, forward-thinking nation. But the decade was also plagued by strife, tragedy, and chaos. It was the decade of the Vietnam War, of inner-city riots, and assassinations that seemed to symbolize the crushing of a new generation’s idealism. A decade of struggle and disillusionment rocked by social, cultural, and political upheaval, the 1960s are remembered because so much changed, and because so much did not.

### III. The Civil Rights Movement Continues

So much of the energy and character of “the sixties” emerged from the civil rights movement, which won its greatest victories in the early years of the decade. The movement itself was changing. Many of the civil rights activists pushing for school desegregation in the 1950s were middle-class and middle-aged. In the 1960s, a new student movement arose whose members wanted swifter changes in the segregated South. Confrontational protests, marches, boycotts, and sit-ins accelerated.

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The tone of the modern U.S. civil rights movement changed at a North Carolina department store in 1960, when four African American students participated in a “sit-in” at a whites-only lunch counter. The 1960 Greensboro sit-ins were typical. Activists sat at segregated lunch counters in an act of defiance, refusing to leave until being served and willing to be ridiculed, attacked, and arrested if they were not. It drew resistance but it forced the desegregation of Woolworth’s department store. It prompted copycat demonstrations across the South. The protests offered evidence that student-led direct action could enact social change and established the civil rights movement’s direction in the forthcoming years.

The following year, civil rights advocates attempted a bolder variation of a “sit-in” when they participated in the Freedom Rides. Activists organized interstate bus rides following a Supreme Court decision



*Images of police brutality against peaceful Civil Rights demonstrators shocked many Americans and helped increase support for the movement. Photograph. Source.*



*James Meredith, accompanied by U.S. Marshalls, walks to class at the University of Mississippi in 1962. Meredith was the first African-American student admitted to the still segregated Ole Miss. Marion S. Trikosko, “Integration at Ole Miss[issippi] Univ[ersity],” 1962. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688159/>.*

outlawing segregation on public buses and trains. The rides intended to test the court’s ruling, which many southern states had ignored. An interracial group of Freedom Riders boarded buses in Washington D.C. with the intention of sitting in integrated patterns on the buses as they traveled through the Deep South. On the initial rides in May 1961, the riders encountered fierce resistance in Alabama. Angry mobs composed of KKK members attacked riders in Birmingham, burning one of the buses and beating the activists who escaped. Despite the fact that the first riders abandoned their trip and decided to fly to their destination, New Orleans, civil rights activists remained vigilant. Additional Freedom Rides launched through the summer and generated national attention amid additional violent resistance. Ultimately, the Interstate Commerce Commission enforced integrated interstate buses and trains in November 1961.

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In the fall of 1961, civil rights activists descended on Albany, a small city in southwest Georgia. A place known for entrenched segregation and racial violence, Albany seemed an unlikely place for black Americans to rally and demand civil rights gains. The activists there, however, formed the Albany Movement, a coalition of civil rights organizers that included members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, or, “snick”), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the NAACP. But in Albany the movement was stymied by police chief Laurie Pritchett, who launched mass arrests but refused to engage in police brutality and bailed out leading officials to avoid negative media attention. It was a peculiar scene, and a lesson for southern activists.



Alabama governor George Wallace stands defiantly at the door of the University of Alabama, blocking the attempted integration of the school. Wallace was perhaps the most notoriously pro-segregation politician of the 1960s, proudly proclaiming in his 1963 inaugural address “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” Warren K. Leffler, “[Governor George Wallace attempting to block integration at the University of Alabama],” June 11, 1963. [Library of Congress](#).



White activists increasingly joined African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. This photograph shows Martin Luther King, Jr., and other black civil rights leaders arm-in-arm with leaders of the Jewish community. Photograph, August 28, 1963. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:March\\_on\\_washington\\_Aug\\_28\\_1963.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:March_on_washington_Aug_28_1963.jpg).

The Albany Movement included elements of a Christian commitment to social justice in its platform, with activists stating that all people were “of equal worth” in God’s family and that “no man may discriminate against or exploit another.” In many instances in the 1960s, black Christianity propelled civil rights advocates to action and demonstrated the significance of religion to the broader civil rights movement. King’s rise to prominence underscored the role that African American religious figures played in the 1960s civil rights movement. Protesters sang hymns and spirituals as they marched. Preachers rallied the people with messages of justice and hope. Churches hosted meetings, prayer vigils, and conferences on nonviolent resistance. The moral thrust of the movement strengthened African American activists while also confronting white society by framing segregation as a moral evil.



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As the civil rights movement garnered more followers and more attention, white resistance stiffened. In October 1962, James Meredith became the first African American student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Meredith's enrollment sparked riots on the Oxford campus, prompting President John F. Kennedy to send in U.S. Marshals and National Guardsmen to maintain order. On an evening known infamously as the Battle of Ole Miss, segregationists clashed with troops in the middle of campus, resulting in two deaths and hundreds of injuries. Violence despite federal intervention served as a reminder of the strength of white resistance to the civil rights movement, particularly in the realm of education.

The following year, 1963, was perhaps the decade's most eventful year for civil rights. In April and May, the SCLC organized the Birmingham Campaign, a broad campaign of direct action aiming to topple segregation in Alabama's largest city. Activists used business boycotts, sit-ins, and peaceful marches as part of the campaign. SCLC leader Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed, prompting his famous handwritten letter urging not only his nonviolent approach but active confrontation to directly challenge injustice. The campaign further added to King's national reputation and featured powerful photographs and video footage of white police officers using fire hoses and attack dogs on young African American protesters. It also yielded an agreement to desegregate public accommodations in the city: activists in Birmingham scored a victory for civil rights and drew



*Lyndon B. Johnson sits with Civil Rights Leaders in the White House. One of Johnson's greatest legacies would be his staunch support of civil rights legislation. Photograph, January 18, 1964. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lyndon\\_Johnson\\_meeting\\_with\\_civil\\_rights\\_leaders.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lyndon_Johnson_meeting_with_civil_rights_leaders.jpg).*

international praise for the nonviolent approach in the face of police-sanctioned violence and bombings.

White resistance magnified. While much of the rhetoric surrounding the 1960s focused on a younger, more liberal generation's progressive ideas, conservatism maintained a strong presence on the American political scene. Few political figures in the decade embodied the working-class, conservative views held by millions of white Americans quite like George Wallace. Wallace's vocal stance on segregation was immortalized in his 1963 inaugural address as Alabama governor with the phrase: "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" Just as the civil rights movement began to gain unprecedented strength, Wallace became the champion of the many white southerners opposed to the movement. Consequently, Wallace was one of the best examples of the very real opposition civil rights activists faced in the late twentieth century.



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As governor, Wallace loudly supported segregation. His efforts were symbolic, but they earned him national recognition as a political figure willing to fight for what many southerners saw as their traditional way of life. In June 1963, just five months after becoming governor, in his “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door,” Wallace famously stood in the door of a classroom building to protest integration at the University of Alabama. President Kennedy addressed the nation that evening, criticizing Wallace and calling for a comprehensive civil rights bill. A day later, civil rights leader Medgar Evers was assassinated at his home in Jackson, Mississippi.

That summer, civil rights leaders organized the August 1963 March on Washington. The march called for, among other things, civil rights legislation, school integration, an end to discrimination by public and private employers, job training for the unemployed, and a raise in the minimum wage. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, an internationally renowned call for civil rights that raised the movement’s profile to new heights and put unprecedented pressure on politicians to pass meaningful civil rights legislation.

Kennedy offered support for a civil rights bill, but, unable to push past southern resistance and unwilling to expend too much political capital, the bill stalled in Congress. Then, on November



*Lyndon B. Johnson was willing to use whatever means necessary to get his legislation passed. Yoichi R. Okamoto, Photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson pressuring Senator Richard Russell, December 17, 1963. [Wikimedia](#).*

22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. The nation’s youthful, popular president was gone. Vice President Lyndon Johnson lacked Kennedy’s youth, his charisma, his popularity, and his aristocratic upbringing, but no one knew Washington better and no one before or since fought harder and more successfully to pass meaningful civil rights legislation. Raised in poverty in the Texas Hill Country, Johnson scratched and clawed his way up the political ladder. He was both ruthlessly ambitious and keenly conscious of poverty and injustice. He idolized Franklin Roosevelt, for instance, whose New Deal had brought improvements for the impoverished Central Texans Johnson grew up with.

President Lyndon Johnson, then, an old white southerner with a thick Texas drawl, embraced the civil rights movement. He took Kennedy’s stalled civil rights bill, ensured that it would have teeth, and navigated it through Congress. The following

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summer he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, widely considered to be among the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in American history. The comprehensive act barred segregation in public accommodations and outlawed discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and national or religious origin.

The civil rights movement created space for political leaders to pass legislation, and the movement continued pushing forward. Direct action continued through the summer of 1964, as student-run organizations like SNCC and CORE (The Congress of Racial Equality) helped with the Freedom Summer in Mississippi, a drive to register African American voters in a state with an ugly history of discrimination. Freedom Summer campaigners set up schools for African American children and endured intimidation tactics. Even with progress, violent resistance against civil rights continued, particularly in regions with longstanding traditions of segregation.

In March 1965, when activists attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, with the support of prominent civil rights leaders on behalf of local African American voting rights. In a narrative that had become familiar, “Bloody Sunday” featured peaceful protesters attacked by white law enforcement with batons and tear gas. After they were turned away violently a second time, marchers finally made the 70-mile trek to the state capitol later in the month. Coverage of the first march prompted President Johnson



*Five leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. From left: Bayard Rustin, Andrew Young, N.Y. Congressman William Ryan, James Farmer, and John Lewis in 1965. Stanley Wolfson, Photograph, 1965. Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98515229/>.*

to present the bill that became the Voting Rights Act of 1965, an act that abolished voting discrimination in federal, state, and local elections. In two consecutive years, landmark pieces of legislation had assaulted *de jure* segregation and disenfranchisement.

## VI. Culture and Activism

The 1960s wrought enormous cultural change. The United States that entered the decade looked and sounded little like the one that left it. Rebellion rocked the supposedly hidebound conservatism of the 1950s as the youth counterculture became mainstream. Native Americans, Chicanos, women, and environmentalists participated in movements demonstrating that “rights” activism could be applied to ethnicity, gender, and nature. Even established religious institutions such as the Catholic Church underwent transformations reflecting an emerging emphasis on freedom and tolerance. In each instance, the decade

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brought about substantial progress with a reminder that the activism in each cultural realm remained fluid and unfinished.

Much of the counterculture was filtered through popular culture and consumption. The fifties consumer culture still saturated the country and advertisers continued to appeal to teenagers and the expanding youth market. During the 1960s, though, advertisers looked to a growing counterculture to sell their products. Popular culture and popular advertising in the 1950s had promoted an ethos of “fitting in” and buying products to conform. The new countercultural ethos touted individuality and rebellion. Some advertisers were subtle; ads for Volkswagens acknowledged the flaws and strange look of their cars. One ad read, “Presenting America’s slowest fastback,” which “won’t go over 72 mph even though the speedometer shows a wildly optimistic top speed of 90.” Another stated, “And if you run out of gas, it’s easy to push.” By marketing the car’s flaws and reframing them as positive qualities, the advertisers commercialized young peoples’ resistance to commercialism. And it positioned the VW as a car for those who didn’t mind standing out in a crowd. A more obviously countercultural ad for the VW Bug showed two cars: one black and one painted multi-color in the hippie style; the contrasting captions read, “We do our thing,” and “You do yours.”

Companies marketed their products as countercultural in and of themselves. One of the more obvious



*Epitomizing the folk music and protest culture of 1960s youth, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan are pictured here singing together at the March on Washington in 1963. Photograph, Wikimedia, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Joan\\_Baez\\_Bob\\_Dylan.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Joan_Baez_Bob_Dylan.jpg).*

examples was a 1968 ad from Columbia Records, a hugely successful record label since the 1920s. The ad pictured a group of stock rebellious characters—a shaggy-haired white hippie, a buttoned up Beat, two biker types, and a black jazz man sporting an afro—in a jail cell. The counterculture had been busted, the ad states, but “the man can’t bust our music.” Merely buying records from Columbia was an act of rebellion, one that brought the buyer closer to the counterculture figures portrayed in the ad.

But it wasn’t just advertising: the culture was changing and changing rapidly. Conservative cultural norms were falling everywhere. The dominant style of women’s fashion in the 1950s, for instance, was the poodle skirt and the sweater, tight-waisted and buttoned up. The 1960s ushered in an era of much less restrictive clothing. Capri pants became popular casual wear. Skirts became shorter. When Mary

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Quant invented the miniskirt in 1964, she said it was a garment “in which you could move, in which you could run and jump.” By the late 1960s, the hippies’ more androgynous look became trendy. Such trends bespoke the new popular ethos of the 1960s: freedom, rebellion, and individuality.

In a decade plagued by social and political instability, the American counterculture also sought psychedelic drugs as its remedy for alienation. For young, middle-class whites, society had become stagnant and bureaucratic. The New Left, for instance, arose on college campuses frustrated with the lifeless bureaucracies that they believed strangled true freedom. LSD began its life as a drug used primarily in psychological research before trickling down into college campuses and out into society at large. The



*Fashion can sometimes capture a generation's world view. Miniskirts – one of the most radical and popular fashions of the 1960s – demonstrated the new sexual openness of young women. Photograph of young woman in Eugene, Oregon, 1966. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1960s\\_fashions\\_\(1709303069\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1960s_fashions_(1709303069).jpg).*

counterculture’s notion that American stagnation could be remedied by a spiritual-psychedelic experience drew heavily from psychologists and sociologists. (By 1966, enough incidents had been connected to LSD to spur a Senate hearing on the drug and newspapers were reporting that hundreds of LSD users had been admitted to psychiatric wards.)

The counterculture conquered popular culture. Rock ‘n’ roll, liberalized sexuality, an embrace of diversity, recreational drug use, unalloyed idealism, and pure earnestness marked a new generation. Criticized by conservatives as culturally dangerous and by leftists as empty narcissism, the youth culture nevertheless dominated headlines and steered American culture. Perhaps 100,000 youth descended on San Francisco for the utopic promise of 1967’s Summer of Love. 1969’s Woodstock concert became shorthand for the new youth culture and its mixture of politics,



*The Volkswagen Beetle became an icon of 1960s culture and a paradigm of a new advertising age. This tongue-in-cheek advertisement attracted laughs and attention from the public and business world. <http://www.videosurrey.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/beetle-coccinelle-volkswagen-vw-publicite-vin-tage-03.jpg>.*



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protest, and personal fulfillment. While the ascendance of the hippies would be both exaggerated and short-lived, and while Vietnam and Richard Nixon shattered much of its idealism, the counterculture's liberated social norms and its embrace of personal fulfillment still define much of American culture.

### VII. Beyond Civil Rights

Despite substantial legislative achievements, frustrations with the slow pace of change and with the limits of the civil movement rose. Tensions continued to mount in cities and the tone of the civil rights movement changed yet again. Activists became less conciliatory in their calls for progress. Many embraced the more militant message of the burgeoning Black Power Movement and the late Malcolm X, a Nation of Islam (NOI) minister who had encouraged African Americans to pursue freedom, equality, and justice by “any means necessary.” Prior to his death, Malcolm X and the NOI emerged as the radical alternative to the racially integrated, largely Protestant approach of the Martin Luther King, Jr.-led civil rights movement. Malcolm advocated armed resistance in defense for the safety and well being of black Americans, stating, “I don’t call it violence when it’s self-defense, I call it intelligence.” For his part, King and leaders from more mainstream organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League criticized both Malcolm X and the NOI for what they perceived to be racial demagoguery. King believed Malcolm’s speeches were a “great disservice” to black Americans, claiming that X’s



Like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois before them, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X represented two styles of racial uplift while maintaining the same general goal of ending racial discrimination. How they would get to that goal is where the men diverged. Marion S. Trikosko, “[Martin Luther King and Malcolm X waiting for press conference],” March 26, 1964. *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92522562/>.

speeches lamented the problems of African Americans without offering solutions. The differences between Dr. King and Malcolm X represented a core ideological tension that would inhabit black political thought throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

By the late 1960s, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), led by figures such as Stokely Carmichael, had expelled its white members and shunned the interracial effort in the rural South, focusing instead on injustices in northern urban areas. After President Johnson refused to take up the cause of the black delegates in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, SNCC activists became frustrated with institutional tactics and turned away from the organization’s founding principle of nonviolence over the course of the next year. This evolving, more aggressive movement

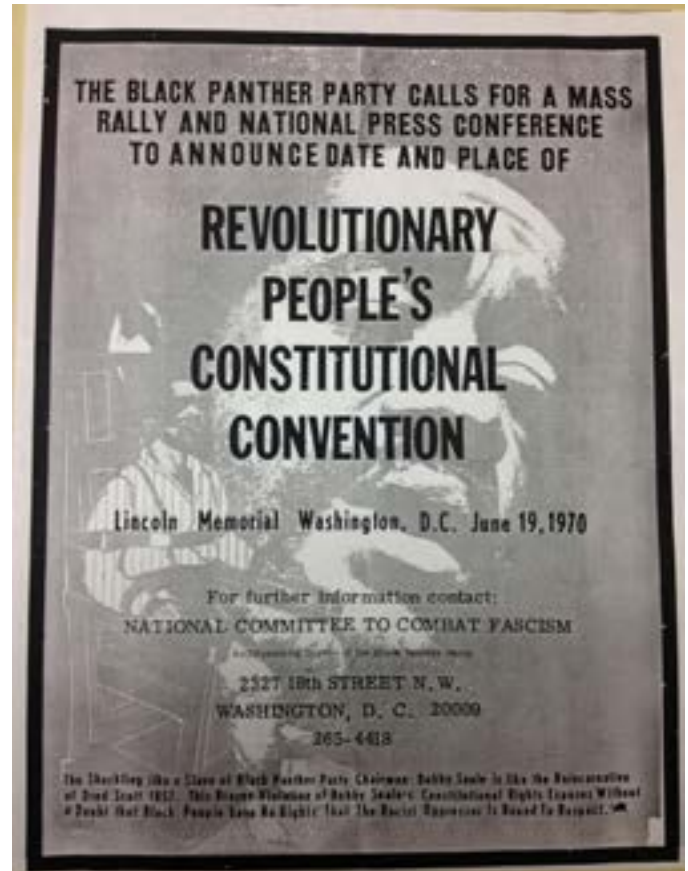


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called for African Americans to play a dominant role in cultivating black institutions and articulating black interests rather than relying on interracial, moderate approaches. At a June 1966 civil rights march, Carmichael told the crowd, “What we gonna start saying now is black power!” The slogan not only resonated with audiences, it also stood in direct contrast to King’s “Freedom Now!” campaign. The political slogan of black power could encompass many meanings, but at its core stood for the self-determination of blacks in political, economic, and social organizations.

While Carmichael asserted that “black power means black people coming together to form a political force,” to many it also meant violence. In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. The Black Panthers became the standard-bearers for direct action and self-defense, using the concept of “decolonization” in their drive to liberate black communities from white power structures. The revolutionary organization also sought reparations and exemptions for black men from the military draft. Citing police brutality and racist governmental policies, the Panthers aligned themselves with the “other people of color in the world” against whom America was fighting abroad. Although it was perhaps most well-known for its open display of weapons, military-style dress, and black nationalist beliefs, the Party’s 10-Point Plan also included employment, housing, and education. The Black Panthers worked



*The Black Panther Party used radical and incendiary tactics to bring attention to the continued oppression of blacks in America. Read the bottom paragraph on this rally poster carefully. [Wikimedia](#).*

in local communities to run “survival programs” that provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and drug rehabilitation. They focused on modes of resistance that empowered black activists on their own terms.

But African Americans weren’t the only Americans struggling to assert themselves in the 1960s. The successes of the civil rights movement and growing grassroots activism inspired countless new movements. In the summer of 1961, for instance, frustrated Native American university

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students founded the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) to draw attention to the plight of indigenous Americans. In the Pacific Northwest, the Council advocated for tribal fishermen to retain immunity from conservation laws on reservations and in 1964 held a series of “fish-ins”: activists and celebrities cast nets and waited for the police to arrest them. NIYC’s militant rhetoric and use of direct action marked the beginning of what was called the Red Power movement, an intertribal movement designed to draw attention to Native issues and protest discrimination. The American Indian Movement (AIM) and other activists staged dramatic demonstrations. In November 1969, dozens began a year-and-a-half occupation of the abandoned Alcatraz Island, in San Francisco Bay. In 1973, hundreds occupied the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, site of an infamous 1890 Indian massacre, for several months.

Meanwhile, the Chicano movement in the 1960s emerged out of the broader Mexican American civil rights movement of the post-World War II era. While “Chicano” was initially considered a derogatory term for Mexican immigrants, activists in the 1960s reclaimed the term and used it as a catalyst to campaign for political and social change among Mexican Americans. The Chicano movement confronted discrimination in schools, politics, agriculture, and other formal and informal institutions. Organizations like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDF) buoyed the Chicano



*While the Pan-Indian movement of the 1960s failed, a sign remains of the Native American occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay. Photograph, July 18, 2006. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alcatraz_Island_01_Prison_sign.jpg), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alcatraz\\_Island\\_01\\_Prison\\_sign.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alcatraz_Island_01_Prison_sign.jpg).*

movement and patterned themselves after similar influential groups in the African American civil rights movement. (See, for instance, Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966-1977 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014).))

Cesar Chavez became the most well-known figure of the Chicano movement, using nonviolent tactics to campaign for workers’ rights in the grape fields of California. Chavez and activist Dolores Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association, which eventually merged and became the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA). The UFWA fused the causes of Chicano and Filipino activists protesting subpar working conditions of California farmers on American soil. In addition to embarking on a hunger

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strike and a boycott of table grapes, Chavez led a 300-mile march in March and April of 1966 from Delano, California to the state capital of Sacramento. The pro-labor campaign garnered the national spotlight and the support of prominent political figures such as Robert Kennedy. Today, Chavez's birthday (March 31) is observed as a federal holiday in California, Colorado, and Texas.

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales was another activist whose calls for Chicano self-determination resonated long past the 1960s. A former boxer and Denver native, Gonzales founded the Crusade for Justice in 1966, an organization that would establish the first annual Chicano Liberation Day at the National Chicano Youth Conference by decade's end. The conference also yielded the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, a Chicano nationalist manifesto that reflected Gonzales' vision of Chicano as a unified, historically grounded, all-encompassing group fighting against discrimination in the United States. By 1970, the Texas-based La Raza Unida political party had a strong foundation for promoting Chicano nationalism and continuing the campaign for Mexican American civil rights.

The feminist movement also made great strides in the 1960s. Women were active in both the civil rights movement and the labor movement, but their increasing awareness of gender inequality did not find a receptive audience among male leaders in those movements. In the 1960s, then, many of these



*The United Farm Workers Union become a strong force for bettering working conditions of laborers in California and Florida agriculture. Cesar Chavez (center) and UFW supporters attend an outdoor Mass on the capitol steps in Sacramento, Calif., before start of a labor protest march, date unknown. Huffington Post.*

women began to form a movement of their own. Soon the country experienced a groundswell of feminist consciousness.

An older generation of women who preferred to work within state institutions figured prominently in the early part of the decade. When John F. Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt headed the effort. The Commission's Invitation to Action was released in 1963. Finding discriminatory provisions in the law and practices of industrial, labor, and governmental organizations, the Commission advocated for "changes, many of them long overdue, in the conditions of women's opportunity in the United States." Change was necessary in areas of employment practices, federal tax and benefit policies affecting women's income, labor laws, and services for women as wives, mothers, and workers. This call for action, if heeded, would ameliorate the types of

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discrimination primarily experienced by middle-class and elite white working women, all of whom were used to advocating through institutional structures like government agencies and unions.

Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* hit bookshelves the same year the Commission released its report. Friedan had been active in the union movement, and was by this time a mother in the new suburban landscape of post-war America. In her book, Friedan labeled the "problem that has no name," and in doing so helped many white middle-class American women come to see their dissatisfaction as housewives not as something "wrong with [their] marriage, or [themselves]," but instead as a social problem experienced by millions of American women. Friedan observed that there was a "discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image I call the feminine mystique." No longer would women allow society to blame the "problem that has no name" on a loss of femininity, too much education, or too much female independence and equality with men.

The 1960s also saw a different group of women pushing for change in government policy. Welfare mothers began to form local advocacy groups in addition to the National Welfare Rights Organization founded in 1966. Mostly African American, these activists fought for greater benefits and more control over welfare policy and implementation. Women like Johnnie Tillmon successfully advocated for larger grants for school clothes and household



*The 1966 Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers March ("La Marcha"). August 27, 1966. Via the University of Texas-San Antonio Libraries' Special Collections (MS 360: E-0012-187-D-16)*

equipment in addition to gaining due process and fair administrative hearings prior to termination of welfare entitlements.

Yet another mode of feminist activism was the formation of consciousness-raising groups. These groups met in women's homes and at women's centers, providing a safe environment for women to discuss everything from experiences of gender discrimination to pregnancy, from relationships with men and women to self-image. The goal of consciousness-raising was to increase self-awareness and validate the experiences of women. Groups framed such individual experiences as examples of society-wide sexism, and claimed that "the personal is political." Consciousness-raising groups created a wealth of personal stories that feminists could use in other forms of activism and crafted networks of women that activists could mobilize support for protests.



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The end of the decade was marked by the Women's Strike for Equality celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's right to vote. Sponsored by NOW (the National Organization for Women), the 1970 protest focused on employment discrimination, political equality, abortion, free childcare, and equality in marriage. All of these issues foreshadowed the backlash against feminist goals in the 1970s. Not only would feminism face opposition from other women who valued the traditional homemaker role to which feminists objected, the feminist movement would also fracture internally as minority women challenged white feminists' racism and lesbians vied for more prominence within feminist organizations.

American environmentalism's significant gains during the 1960s emerged in part from Americans' recreational use of nature. Postwar Americans backpacked, went to the beach, fished, and joined birding organizations in greater numbers than



*Losing membership and influence throughout the world, leaders of the Catholic Church met in 1965 institute new measures to modernize and open the church. This ecumenical council would become known as the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II. Photograph of the grand procession of the Council Fathers at St. Peter's Basilica, October 11, 1962. Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Konzilseroeffnung\\_1.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Konzilseroeffnung_1.jpg).*

ever before. These experiences, along with increased formal education, made Americans more aware of threats to the environment and, consequently, to themselves. Many of these threats increased in the post-war years as developers bulldozed open space for suburbs and new hazards from industrial and nuclear pollutants loomed over all organisms.

By the time that biologist Rachel Carson published her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962, a nascent environmentalism had emerged in America. *Silent Spring* stood out as an unparalleled argument for the interconnectedness of ecological and human health. Pesticides, Carson argued, also posed a threat to human health, and their over-use threatened the ecosystems that supported food production. Carson's argument was compelling to many Americans, including President Kennedy, and was virulently opposed by chemical industries that suggested the



*The 1966 Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers March ("La Marcha"). August 27, 1966. Via the University of Texas-San Antonio Libraries' Special Collections (MS 360: E-0012-187-D-16)*



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book was the product of an emotional woman, not a scientist.

After Silent Spring, the social and intellectual currents of environmentalism continued to expand rapidly, culminating in the largest demonstration in history, Earth Day, on April 22, 1970, and in a decade of lawmaking that significantly restructured American government. Even before the massive gathering for Earth Day, lawmakers from the local to federal level had pushed for and achieved regulations to clean up the air and water. President Richard Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act into law in 1970, requiring environmental impact statements for any project directed or funded by the federal government. He also created the Environmental Protection Agency, the first agency charged with studying, regulating, and disseminating knowledge about the environment. A raft of laws followed that were designed to offer increased protection for air, water, endangered species, and natural areas.

The decade's activism worked all across society. It even affected the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council, called by Pope John XXIII to modernize the church and bring it in closer dialogue with the non-Catholic world, operated from 1962 to 1965, when it proclaimed multiple reforms, including the "vernacular mass" (or, mass in local languages, rather than in Latin) and a greater role for laypeople, and especially women, in the Church. Many Catholic churches adopted more informal, contemporary

styles. Many conservative Catholics recoiled at what they perceived as rapid and dangerous changes, but Vatican II's reforms in many ways created the modern Catholic Church.

*Content provided by [www.americanyawp.com](http://www.americanyawp.com)*

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### III. Race, Social, and Cultural Anxieties

The civil rights movement looked dramatically different at the end of the 1960s than it had at the beginning. The movement had never been monolithic, but prominent, competing ideologies had fractured it with new assertive ideas. The rise of the Black Power movement challenged the integrationist dreams of many older activist as the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X fueled disillusionment and many alienated activists recoiled from liberal reformers.

The political evolution of the civil rights movement was reflected in American culture. The lines of race, class and gender ruptured American “mass” culture. As the monolith of popular American culture shattered—a monolith pilloried in the fifties and sixties as exclusively white, male-dominated, conservative, and stifling—Americans retreated into ever smaller, segmented subcultures. Marketers now targeted particular products to ever smaller pieces of the population, including previously neglected groups such as African Americans. Subcultures often revolved around certain musical styles, whether pop, disco, hard rock, punk rock, country, or hip-hop. Styles of dress and physical appearance likewise aligned with cultures of choice.

If the popular rock acts of the sixties appealed to a new counterculture, the seventies witnessed the resurgence of cultural forms that appealed to a white



*Los Angeles police hustle rioter into car; August 13, 1965, [Wikimedia](#).*

working class confronting the social and political upheavals of the 1960s. Country hits such as Merle Haggard’s “Okie from Muskogee” evoked simpler times and places where people “still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse” and they “don’t let our hair grow long and shaggy like the hippies out in San Francisco.” A popular television sitcom, *All in the Family*, became an unexpected hit among “middle America” The show’s main character, Archie Bunker, was designed to mock reactionary middle-aged white men, but audiences embraced him. “Isn’t anyone interested in upholding standards?” he lamented in an episode dealing with housing integration. “Our world is coming crumbling down. The coons are coming!”

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As Bunker knew, African-Americans were becoming much more visible in American culture. While black cultural forms had been prominent throughout American history, they assumed new popular forms in the 1970s. Disco offered a new, optimistic, racially integrated pop music. Behind the scenes, African American religious styles became an outsized influence on pop music. Musicians like Aretha Franklin, Andre Crouch, and “fifth Beatle” Billy Preston brought their background in church performance to their own recordings as well as to the work of white artists like the Rolling Stones, with whom they collaborated. And by the end of the decade African American musical artists had introduced American society to one of the most significant musical innovations in decades: the Sugarhill Gang’s 1979 record, *Rapper’s Delight*. A lengthy paean to black machismo, it became the first rap single to reach the top 40.

Just as rap represented a hyper-masculine black cultural form, Hollywood popularized its white equivalent. Films such as 1971’s *Dirty Harry* captured a darker side of the national mood. Clint Eastwood’s titular character exacted violent justice on clear villains, working within the sort of brutally simplistic ethical standard that appealed to Americans anxious about a perceived breakdown in “law and order.” (“The film’s moral position is fascist,” said critic Roger Ebert, who nevertheless gave it three out of four stars.)



CBS Television, *All in the Family* Cast 1973, [Wikimedia](#).

Perhaps the strongest element fueling American anxiety over “law and order” was the increasingly visible violence that marked the waning civil rights movement. No longer confined to the anti-black terrorism that struck the southern civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, publicly visible violence now broke out among blacks in urban riots and among whites protesting new civil rights programs. In the mid-1970s, for instance, protests over the use of busing to overcome residential segregation and truly integrate public schools in Boston washed the city in racial violence. Stanley Forman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning photo, “The Soiling of Old Glory,” famously captured one black teenager,

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Ted Landsmark, being attacked by a mob of anti-busing protesters, one of whom wielded an American flag.

Urban riots, though, rather than anti-integration violence, tainted many white Americans' perception of the civil rights movement and urban life in general. Civil unrest broke out across the country, but the riots in Watts/Los Angeles (1965), Newark (1967), and Detroit (1967) were most shocking. In each, a physical altercation between white police officers and African Americans spiraled into days of chaos and destruction. Tens of thousands participated in urban riots. Many looted and destroyed white-owned business. There were dozens of deaths, tens of millions of dollars in property damage, and an exodus of white capital that only further isolated urban poverty.

In 1967, President Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission to investigate the causes of America's riots. Their report became an unexpected bestseller. The Commission cited black frustration with the hopelessness of poverty as the underlying cause of urban unrest. As the head of the black National Business League testified, "It is to be more than naive—indeed, it is a little short of sheer madness—for anyone to expect the very poorest of the American poor to remain docile and content in their poverty when television constantly and eternally dangles the opulence of our affluent society before their hungry eyes." A Newark rioter who looted several boxes

of shirts and shoes put it more simply: "They tell us about that pie in the sky but that pie in the sky is too damn high." But white conservatives blasted the conclusion that white racism and economic hopelessness were to blame for the violence. African Americans wantonly destroying private property, they said, was not a symptom of America's intractable racial inequalities, but the logical outcome of a liberal culture of permissiveness that tolerated—even encouraged—nihilistic civil disobedience. Many white moderates and liberals, meanwhile, saw the explosive violence as a sign African Americans had rejected the nonviolence of the earlier civil rights movement.

The unrest of the late sixties did, in fact, reflect a real and growing disillusionment among African Americans with the fate of the civil rights crusade. In the still-moldering ashes of Jim Crow, African Americans in Watts and other communities across the country bore the burdens of lifetimes of legally sanctioned discrimination in housing, employment, and credit. Segregation too often survived the legal dismantling of Jim Crow. The perseverance into the present day of stark racial and economic segregation in nearly all American cities destroyed any simple distinction between southern "de jure" segregation and non-southern "de facto" segregation. The inner cities became traps that too few could escape.

Political achievements such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act were indispensable

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legal preconditions for social and political equality, but, for most, the movement's long (and now often forgotten) goal of economic justice proved as elusive as ever. "I worked to get these people the right to eat cheeseburgers," Martin Luther King Jr. supposedly said to Bayard Rustin as they toured the devastation in Watts some years earlier, "and now I've got to do something... to help them get the money to buy it." What good was the right to enter a store without money for purchases?

## VII. The Politics of Love, Sex, and Gender

The sexual revolution continued into the 1970s. Many Americans—feminists, gay men, lesbians, and straight couples—challenged strict gender roles and rejected the rigidity of the nuclear family. Cohabitation without marriage spiked, straight couples married later (if at all), and divorce levels climbed. Sexuality, decoupled from marriage and procreation, became for many not only a source of personal fulfillment, but a worthy political cause.

At the turn of the decade, sexuality was considered a private matter yet rigidly regulated by federal, state, and local law. Statutes typically defined legitimate sexual expression within the confines of patriarchal, procreative marriage. Interracial marriage, for instance, was illegal in many states until 1967 and remained largely taboo long after. Same-sex intercourse and cross-dressing were criminalized in



Warren K. Leffler, *Demonstrators opposed to the ERA in front of the White House, 1977* via [Library of Congress](#).

most states, and gay men, lesbians, and transgender people were vulnerable to violent police enforcement as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

Two landmark legal rulings in 1973 established the battle lines for the "sex wars" of the 1970s. First, the Supreme Court's 7-1 ruling in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) struck down a Texas law that prohibited abortion in all cases when a mother's life was not in danger. The Court's decision built upon precedent from a 1965 ruling that, in striking down a Connecticut law prohibiting married couples from using birth control, recognized a constitutional "right to privacy." In *Roe*, the Court reasoned that "this right of privacy . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." The Court held that states could not interfere with a woman's right to an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy and could only fully prohibit abortions during the third trimester.



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Other Supreme Court rulings, however, found that sexual privacy could be sacrificed for the sake of “public” good. *Miller v. California* (1973), a case over the unsolicited mailing of sexually explicit advertisements for illustrated “adult” books, held that the first amendment did not protect “obscene” material, defined by the Court as anything with sexual appeal that lacked, “serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.” The ruling expanded states’ abilities to pass laws prohibiting materials like hardcore pornography. However, uneven enforcement allowed pornographic theaters and sex shops to proliferate despite whatever laws states had on the books. Americans debated whether these represented the pinnacle of sexual liberation or, as poet and lesbian feminist Rita Mae Brown suggested, “the ultimate conclusion of sexist logic.”

Of more tangible concern for most women, though, was the right to equal employment access. Thanks partly to the work of black feminists like Pauli Murray, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act banned employment discrimination based on sex, in addition to race, color, religion, and national origin. “If sex is not included,” she argued in a memorandum sent to members of Congress, “the civil rights bill would be including only half of the Negroes.” Like most laws, Title VII’s full impact came about slowly, as women across the nation cited it to litigate and pressure employers to offer them equal opportunities as men. For one, employers in the late sixties and seventies



The window under the Stonewall sign reads: “We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the Village-Mattachine.” Stonewall Inn 1969, via [Wikimedia](#).

still viewed certain occupations as inherently feminine or masculine. The National Organization for Women (NOW) organized airline workers against a major company’s sexist ad campaign that showed female flight attendants wearing buttons that read, “I’m Debbie, Fly Me” or “I’m Cheryl, Fly Me.” Actual female flight attendants were required to wear similar buttons. Other women sued to

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gain access to traditionally male jobs like factory work. Protests prompted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to issue a more robust set of protections between 1968 and 1971. Though advancement came haltingly and partially, women used these protections to move eventually into traditional male occupations, politics, and corporate management.

The battle for sexual freedom was not just about the right to get *into* places, though. It was also about the right to get out of them—specifically, unhappy households and marriages. Between 1959 and 1979, the American divorce rate more than doubled. By the early 1980s, nearly half of all American marriages ended in divorce. The stigma attached to divorce evaporated and a growing sense of sexual and personal freedom motivated individuals to leave abusive or unfulfilling marriages. Legal changes also promoted higher divorce rates. Before 1969, most states required one spouse to prove that the other was guilty of a specific offense, such as adultery. The difficulty of getting a divorce under this system encouraged widespread lying in divorce courts. Even couples desiring an amicable split were sometimes forced to claim that one spouse had cheated on the other even if neither (or both) had. Other couples temporarily relocated to states with more lenient divorce laws, such as Nevada. Widespread recognition of such practices prompted reforms. In 1969, California adopted the first no-fault divorce law. By the end of the 1970s, almost every state had adopted some form of no-fault divorce. The new laws

allowed for divorce on the basis of “irreconcilable differences,” even if only one party felt that he or she could not stay in the marriage.

As straight couples enjoyed eased bonds of matrimony, gay men and women negotiated a harsh world that stigmatized homosexuality as a mental illness or depraved immoral act. Building upon postwar efforts by gay rights organizations to bring homosexuality into the mainstream of American culture, young gay activists of the late sixties and seventies began to challenge what they saw as the conservative gradualism of the “homophile” movement. Inspired by the burgeoning radicalism of the Black Power movement, the New Left protests of the Vietnam War, and the counterculture movement for sexual freedom, gay and lesbian activists agitated for a broader set of sexual rights that emphasized an assertive notion of “liberation” rooted not in mainstream assimilation, but in pride of sexual difference.

Perhaps no single incident did more to galvanize gay and lesbian activism than the 1969 uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York City’s Greenwich Village. Police regularly raided gay bars and hangouts. But when police raided the Stonewall in June 1969, the bar patrons protested and sparked a multi-day street battle that catalyzed a national movement for gay liberation. Seemingly overnight, calls for homophile respectability were replaced with chants of “Gay Power!”

# THE AMERICAN YAWP

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In the following years, gay Americans gained unparalleled access to private and public spaces. Gay activists increasingly attacked cultural norms that demanded they keep their sexuality hidden. Citing statistics that sexual secrecy contributed to stigma and suicide, gay activists urged people to “come out” and embrace their sexuality. A step towards the “normalization” of homosexuality occurred in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association stopped classifying homosexuality as a mental illness. Pressure mounted on politicians. In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. More than eighty cities and nine states followed suit over the following decade. But progress proceeded unevenly, and gay Americans continued to suffer hardships from a hostile culture.

As well, like all social movements, the sexual revolution was not free of division. Transgender people were often banned from participating in Gay Pride rallies and lesbian feminist conferences. They, in turn, mobilized to fight the high incidence of rape, abuse, and murder of transgender people. A 1971 newsletter denounced the notion that transgender people were mentally ill, highlighted the particular injustices they faced in and out of the gay community, and declared, “All power to Trans Liberation.”

As events in the 1970s broadened sexual freedoms and promoted greater gender equality, so too did they generate sustained and organized opposition. Evangelical Christians and other moral conservatives,

for instance, mobilized to reverse gay victories. In 1977, activists in Dade County, Florida used the slogan “Save Our Children” to overturn an ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. A leader of the ascendant religious right, Jerry Falwell, said in 1980 that, “It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues .... We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country.”

Much to Falwell’s delight, conservative Americans did, in fact, stand against and defeat the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), their most stunning social victory of the 1970s. Versions of the Amendment—which declared, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex”—were introduced to Congress each year since 1923. It finally passed amid the upheavals of the sixties and seventies and went to the states for ratification in March 1972. With high approval ratings, the ERA seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Hawaii ratified the Amendment the same day it cleared Congress. Within a year, thirty states had done so. But then the Amendment stalled. It took years for more states to pass it. In 1977, Indiana became the thirty-fifth and final state to ratify.

By 1977, anti-ERA forces had successfully turned the political tide against the Amendment. At a

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time when many women shared Betty Friedan's frustration that society seemed to confine women to the role of homemaker, Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA organization ("Stop Taking Our Privileges") trumpeted the value and lived advantages of being a homemaker and mother. Marshaling the support of evangelical Christians and other religious conservatives, Schlafly worked tirelessly to stifle the ERA. She lobbied legislators and organized counter-rallies to ensure that Americans heard "from the millions of happily married women who believe in the laws which protect the family and require the husband to support his wife and children." The Amendment needed only three more states for ratification. It never got them. In 1982, the time limit for ratification expired—and along with it, the Amendment.

The failed battle for the ERA uncovered the limits of the feminist crusade. And it illustrated the women's movement's inherent incapacity to represent fully the views of fifty percent of the country's population, a population riven by class differences, racial disparities, and cultural and religious divisions.

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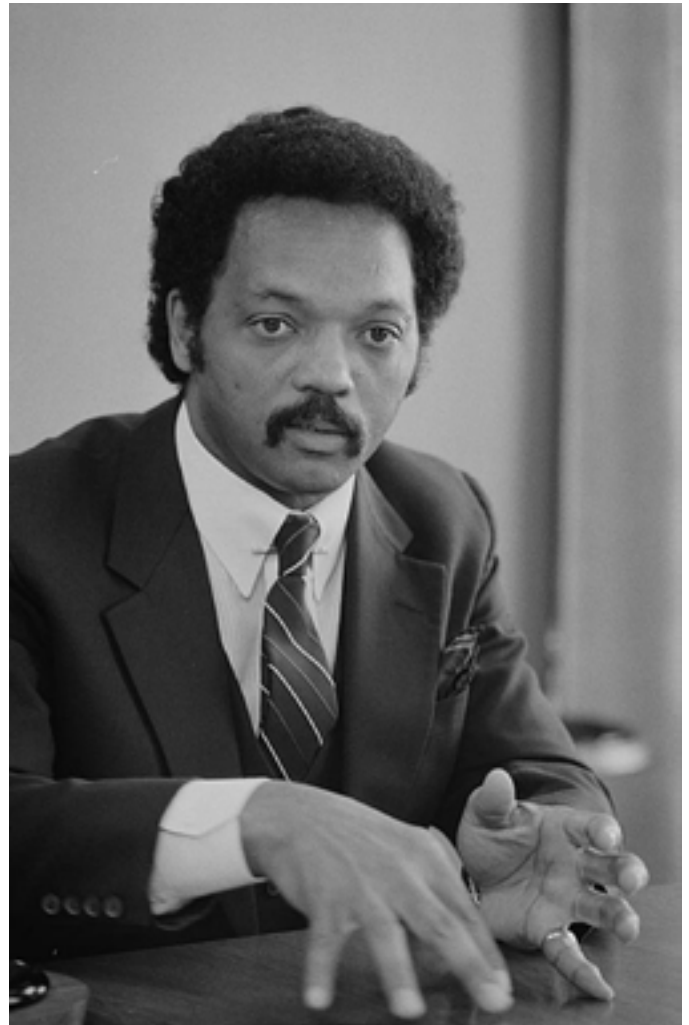
# THE AMERICAN YAWP

## THE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT

### VII. African American Life in Reagan's America

African Americans read Bork's nomination as another signal of the conservative movement's hostility to their social, economic, and political aspirations. Indeed, Ronald Reagan's America presented African Americans with a series of contradictions. Blacks achieved significant advances in politics, culture, and socio-economic status. African Americans continued a trend from the late 1960s and 1970s by gaining control of major municipal governments across the country during the 1980s. In 1983, voters in Philadelphia and Chicago elected Wilson Goode and Harold Washington, respectively, as their cities' first black mayors. At the national level, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson became the first African American man to run for president when he campaigned for the Democratic Party's nomination in 1984 and 1988. Propelled by chants of "Run, Jesse, Run," Jackson achieved notable success in 1988, winning nine state primaries and finishing second with 29% of the vote.

The excitement created by Jackson's campaign mirrored the acclaim received by a few prominent African Americans in media and entertainment. Comedian Eddie Murphy rose to stardom on television's *Saturday Night Live*, and achieved box office success with movies like *48 Hours* and *Beverly Hills Cop*. In 1982, pop singer Michael Jackson released *Thriller*, the best-selling album of all time. Oprah Winfrey began her phenomenally successful nationally syndicated



Jesse Jackson was only the second African American to mount a national campaign for the presidency. His work as a civil rights activist and Baptist minister garnered him a significant following in the African American community, but never enough to secure the Democratic nomination. His Warren K. Leffler, "IVU w/ [i.e., interview with] Rev. Jesse Jackson," July 1, 1983. *Library of Congress*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688127/>.

talk show in 1985. Comedian Bill Cosby's sitcom about an African American doctor and lawyer raising their four children drew the highest ratings on television for most of the decade. The popularity of *The Cosby Show* revealed how class informed perceptions of race in the 1980s. Cosby's fictional TV family



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represented a growing number of black middle-class professionals in the United States. Indeed, income for the top fifth of African American households increased faster than that of white households for most of the decade. Middle-class African Americans found new doors open to them in the 1980s, but poor and working-class blacks faced continued challenges. During Reagan's last year in office the African American poverty rate stood at 31.6%, as opposed to 10.1% for whites. Black unemployment remained double that of whites throughout the decade. By 1990, the median income for black families was \$21,423, 42% below white households. The Reagan administration failed to address such disparities and in many ways intensified them. New Right values threatened the legal principles and federal policies of the Great Society and the "rights revolution." Reagan appointed conservative opponents of affirmative action to lead the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (namely future Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas), U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and the Justice Department's Civil Rights division. Reagan's appointees took aim at key policy achievements of the civil rights movement. When the 1965 Voting Rights Act came up for renewal during Reagan's first term, the Justice Department pushed the president to oppose any extension. Only the intervention of more moderate Congressional Republicans saved the groundbreaking law. The administration also initiated a plan to rescind federal affirmative action rules. In 1986, a broad coalition of groups—including the NAACP, the Urban League, the AFL-CIO, and even the National

Association of Manufacturers—compelled the administration to abandon the effort. Despite the conservative tenor of the country, "diversity" programs were firmly entrenched in the corporate world by the end of the decade. The New Right nonetheless reframed the debate regarding rights and discrimination. Americans increasingly embraced racial diversity as a positive value but approached the issue through an individualistic, not a social, framework. Certain federal policies disproportionately affected racial minorities. Spending cuts enacted by Reagan and Congressional Republicans shrank Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, food stamps, school lunch, and job training programs that provided crucial support to African American households. In 1982, the National Urban League's annual "State of Black America" report concluded that "[n]ever [since the first report in 1976]... has the state of Black America been more vulnerable. Never in that time have black economic rights been under such powerful attack." African American communities, especially in urban areas, also bore the stigma of violence and criminality. Homicide was the leading cause of death for black males between 15 and 24, occurring at a rate six times higher than for other groups. Although African Americans were most often the victims of violent crime, sensationalist media reports incited fears about black-on-white crime in big cities. Ironically, such fear could by itself spark violence. In December 1984 a thirty-seven-year-old white engineer, Bernard Goetz, shot and seriously wounded four black teenagers on a New York City subway car. The so-called "Subway

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Vigilante” suspected that the young men—armed with screwdrivers—planned to rob him. Pollsters found that 90% of white New Yorkers sympathized with Goetz. Echoing the law-and-order rhetoric (and policies) of the 1960s and 1970s, politicians and law enforcement agencies implemented more aggressive policing of minority communities and mandated longer prison sentences for those arrested, inaugurating the explosive growth of mass incarceration that exacted a heavy toll on African American communities long into the twenty-first century.

### IX. Culture Wars of the 1980’s

Popular culture of the 1980s offered another venue in which conservatives and liberals waged a battle of ideas. Reagan’s militarism and patriotism pervaded movies like *Top Gun* and the *Rambo* series, starring Sylvester Stallone as a Vietnam War veteran haunted by his country’s failure to pursue victory in Southeast Asia. In contrast, director Olive Stone offered searing condemnations of the war in *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*. Television shows like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* celebrated wealth and glamour, reflecting the pride in conspicuous consumption that emanated from the White House and corporate boardrooms during the decade. At the same time, films like *Wall Street* and novels like Bret Easton Ellis’s *Less Than Zero* skewered the excesses of the rich. Yet the most significant aspect of 1980s’ popular culture was its lack of politics altogether. Rather, Steven Spielberg’s *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and his Indiana



The Apple II computer, introduced in 1977, was the first successful mass-produced microcomputer meant for home use. Rather chunky-looking to our twenty-first-century eyes, this 1984 version of the Apple II was the smallest and sleekest model yet introduced. Indeed, it revolutionized both the substance and design of personal computers. Photograph of the Apple IICb. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apple\\_iicb.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apple_iicb.jpg).

Jones adventure trilogy topped the box office. Cinematic escapism replaced the serious social examinations of 1970s’ film. Quintessential Hollywood leftist Jane Fonda appeared frequently on television but only to peddle exercise videos.

New forms of media changed the ways in which people experienced popular culture. In many cases, this new media contributed to the privatization of life, as people shifted focus from public spaces to their own homes. Movie theaters faced competition from the videocassette recorder (VCR), which allowed people to watch films (or exercise with Jane Fonda) in the privacy of their living room. Arcades gave way to home video game systems. Personal computers proliferated, a trend spearheaded by the Apple Company and its Apple II computer. Television

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viewership—once dominated by the “big three” networks of NBC, ABC, and CBS—fragmented with the rise of cable channels that catered to particular tastes. Few cable channels so captured the popular imagination as MTV, which debuted in 1981. Telegenic artists like Madonna, Prince, and Michael Jackson skillfully used MTV to boost their reputations and album sales. Conservatives condemned music videos for corrupting young people with vulgar, anti-authoritarian messages, but the medium only grew in stature. Critics of MTV targeted Madonna in particular. Her 1989 video “Like a Prayer” drew protests for what some people viewed as sexually suggestive and blasphemous scenes. The religious right increasingly perceived popular culture as hostile to Christian values.

Cultural battles were even more heated in the realm of gender and sexual politics. American women pushed farther into male-dominated spheres during the 1980s. By 1984, women in the workforce outnumbered those who worked at home. That same year, New York Representative Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run on a major party’s presidential ticket when Democratic candidate Walter Mondale named her his running mate. Yet the triumph of the right placed fundamental questions about women’s rights near the center of American politics—particularly in regard to abortion. The issue increasingly divided Americans. Pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans grew rare, as the National Abortion Rights Action League enforced



*The AIDS epidemic hit the gay and African American communities particularly hard in the 1980s, prompting awareness campaigns by celebrities like Patti LaBelle. Poster, c. 1980s. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22Don%27t\\_listen\\_to\\_rumors\\_about\\_AIDS\\_get\\_the\\_facts%22\\_Patti\\_LaBelle.A025218.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22Don%27t_listen_to_rumors_about_AIDS_get_the_facts%22_Patti_LaBelle.A025218.jpg).*

pro-choice orthodoxy on the left and the National Right to Life Commission did the same with pro-life orthodoxy on the right. Religious conservatives took advantage of the Republican takeover of the White House and Senate in 1980 to push for new restrictions on abortion—with limited success. Senators Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Orrin

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Hatch of Utah introduced versions of a “Human Life Amendment” to the U.S. Constitution that defined life as beginning at conception; their efforts failed, though in 1982 Hatch’s amendment came within 18 votes of passage in the Senate. Reagan, more interested in economic issues than social ones, provided only lukewarm support for these efforts. He further outraged anti-abortion activists by appointing Sandra Day O’Connor, a supporter of abortion rights, to the Supreme Court. Despite these setbacks, anti-abortion forces succeeded in defunding some abortion providers. The 1976 Hyde Amendment prohibited the use of federal funds to pay for abortions; by 1990 almost every state had its own version of the Hyde Amendment. Yet some anti-abortion activists demanded more. In 1988 evangelical activist Randall Terry founded Operation Rescue, an organization that targeted abortion clinics and pro-choice politicians with confrontational—and sometimes violent—tactics. Operation Rescue demonstrated that the fight over abortion would grow only more heated in the 1990s.

The emergence of a deadly new illness, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), simultaneously devastated, stigmatized, and energized the nation’s homosexual community. When AIDS appeared in the early 1980s, most of its victims were gay men. For a time the disease was known as GRID—Gay-Related Immunodeficiency Disorder. The epidemic rekindled older pseudo-scientific ideas about inherently diseased nature of homosexual bodies. The Reagan

administration met the issue with indifference, leading liberal Congressman Henry Waxman to rage that “if the same disease had appeared among Americans of Norwegian descent...rather than among gay males, the response of both the government and the medical community would be different.” Some religious figures seemed to relish the opportunity to condemn homosexual activity; Catholic columnist Patrick Buchanan remarked that “the sexual revolution has begun to devour its children.”

Homosexuals were left to forge their own response to the crisis. Some turned to confrontation—like New York playwright Larry Kramer. Kramer founded the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, which demanded a more proactive response to the epidemic. Others sought to humanize AIDS victims; this was the goal of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a commemorative project begun in 1985. By the middle of the decade the federal government began to address the issue haltingly. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, an evangelical Christian, called for more federal funding on AIDS-related research, much to the dismay of critics on the religious right. By 1987 government spending on AIDS-related research reached \$500 million—still only 25% of what experts advocated. In 1987 Reagan convened a presidential commission on AIDS; the commission’s report called for anti-discrimination laws to protect AIDS victims and for more federal spending on AIDS research. The shift encouraged activists. Nevertheless, on issues of abortion and gay rights—as with the push for racial equality—activists

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spent the 1980s preserving the status quo rather than building on previous gains. This amounted to a significant victory for the New Right.

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# UNIT 11

## TIMELINE

### Civil Rights Timeline: 1948 - 1996

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1948 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Executive Order 9981</b> issued by President Truman, desegregating the armed forces.</li> </ul>  |
| 1954 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Brown v. Board of Education</b></i></li> </ul>  |
| 1955 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emmett Till</b> kidnapped, beaten and murdered.</li> <li>• NAACP's <b>Rosa Parks</b> refused to give up seat to a white passenger on the Montgomery, Alabama's bus system, leading to the <b>Montgomery Bus Boycott</b>.</li> </ul>  |
| 1956 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montgomery's busses are desegregated.</li> </ul>  |
| 1957 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)</b> formed by <b>Charles Steele</b> and <b>Fred Shuttlesworth</b> along with <b>Martin Luther King</b> who was its first president.</li> <li>• Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School federal troop and National Guard intervention on behalf of the "<b>Little Rock Nine</b>," opposing pro-segregationist governor <b>Orval Faubus</b>.</li> </ul> |
| 1960 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Woolworth's</b> lunch counter sit-in.</li> <li>• <b>Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)</b> founded.</li> </ul>   |
| 1961 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Freedom Rides</b> sponsored by SNCC and <b>The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)</b>.</li> <li>• <b>National Indian Youth Council</b> established.</li> </ul>   |
| 1962 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>James Meredith</b> attended University of Mississippi as its first black student, with federal troop intervention.</li> <li>• <b>United Farm Workers</b> organized; <b>Cesar Chavez</b> became leader.</li> </ul>  |

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## TIMELINE

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| 1963 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Luther King jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, and writes “<b>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</b>,” arguing civil disobedience against unjust laws.</li> <li>• Television showed Commissioner of Public Safety, <b>Eugene “Bull” Connor</b>, ordering the use of fire hoses and dogs on peaceful demonstrators.</li> <li>• NAACP leader, <b>Medgar Evers</b>, murdered outside of his home.</li> <li>• <b>March on Washington</b> and “<b>I have a Dream</b>” speech of MLK.</li> <li>• <b>Sixteenth Street Baptist Church</b> bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, killing Sunday-school children: Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins.</li> <li>• <b>Betty Friedan</b> published <u><b>The Feminine Mystique</b></u>.</li> <li>• Congress passed the <b>Equal Pay Act</b>, making paying a woman less for the same job illegal.</li> </ul> |
| 1964 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Twenty-fourth Amendment</b> abolished the poll tax, making it illegal to have to pay to vote.</li> <li>• <b>Council of Federated Organizations (COFO)</b> comprising other civil-rights groups launched Freedom Summer, during which a black-voter registration campaign took place.</li> <li>• <b>Civil Rights Act</b> signed by President Lyndon Johnson, prohibiting and allowing federal enforcement against discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin.</li> <li>• Three civil-rights workers’ bodies found in Mississippi. The men had been murdered by the Ku Klux Klan for trying to register black voters.</li> </ul>  |
| 1965 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Griswold v. Connecticut</i></b>, a Supreme Court decision, strikes down state law prohibiting use of contraceptives by married couples.</li> <li>• <b>Malcom X</b> founded <b>Organization of Afro-American Unity</b>, affiliated with <b>Black Muslim</b> faith.</li> <li>• <b>Selma, Alabama riots “Bloody Sunday.”</b></li> <li>• <b>Voting Rights Act</b> passed, overturning state restrictions on voting.</li> <li>• <b>Watts Riots</b> in California.</li> <li>• <b>Executive Order 11246</b> issued by President Johnson, enforcing affirmative action in federal government hiring and employment.</li> <li>• <b>National Origins Act</b> passed, raising Asian immigration to equal levels with Europe.</li> </ul>  |
| 1966 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Black Panthers</b> founded by <b>Huey Newton</b> and <b>Bobby Seale</b> in Oakland, California.</li> <li>• <b>National Organization for Women (NOW)</b> founded.</li> </ul>  |

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## TIMELINE

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| 1967 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Black Power Movement</b> launched by <b>Stokely Carmichael</b>.</li> <li>• <i><b>Loving v. Virginia</b></i>, a Supreme Court case, ruled interracial marriage constitutional.</li> <li>• Newark, New Jersey and <b>Detroit, Michigan race riots</b></li> <li>• <b>Executive Order 11375</b> expands affirmative action to women in federal employment.</li> <li>• <b>Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee</b> founded.</li> </ul>                 |
| 1968 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Luther King assassinated.</li> <li>• <b>Civil Rights Act of 1968</b>, prohibiting discrimination in housing.</li> <li>• <b>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</b> ruled that sex-segregating want ads were illegal.</li> <li>• <b>American Indian Movement (AIM)</b> established.</li> <li>• <b>Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund</b> established.</li> </ul>   |
| 1969 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California became the first state to implement “no fault” or mutual consent divorce.</li> <li>• <b>Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village</b> raided by police. Riots ensued. Ushers in the gay-rights movement.</li> <li>• <b>Young Lords Organization</b>, similar to Black Panthers, forms for Puerto Rican youth in Chicago.</li> <li>• Asian-American studies established at colleges and universities throughout the country.</li> </ul>                  |
| 1970 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Schultz v. Wheaton Glass Co.</b></i>, court case, ruled that equal pay applies to jobs “substantially equal” but not “identical,” e.g. meaning employers cannot change job titles to pay women less.</li> </ul>   |
| 1971 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education</b></i>, a Supreme Court case, upheld busing as a way to integrate public schools. Northern cities, such as Boston, resisted the most.</li> <li>• <i><b>Ms. Magazine</b></i> first published, with <b>Gloria Steinem</b> as editor.</li> </ul>  |
| 1972 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)</b> passed by Congress, but not ratified by the states.</li> <li>• <i><b>Eisenstadt v. Baird</b></i>, a Supreme Court case, ruled that privacy rights allow for an unmarried person’s use of contraceptives.</li> <li>• <b>Title IX</b> of the Education Amendments banned sex discrimination in schools.</li> <li>• <b>Indian Education Act</b> passed, creating <b>Office of Indian Education</b> in the USDE.</li> </ul> |

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## TIMELINE

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| 1973 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Roe v. Wade</b>, a Supreme Court case, legalized abortion nationally.</li> <li>• <b>Wounded Knee</b> reservation siege, lasting seventy-one days.</li> <li>• <b>Vocation Rehabilitation Act</b> passed, barring discrimination against disabled individuals.</li> <li>• American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality as mental illness listing.</li> </ul> |
| 1974 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Equal Credit Opportunity Act</b> passed, banning consumer credit discrimination based on sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, race, or public assistance status.</li> <li>• <b>Equal Education Act</b> passed, making bilingual education more prevalent in schools.</li> </ul>  |
| 1975 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Voting Rights expanded to include language assistance for voters.</li> <li>• Fall of South Vietnam to the communist North resulted in Vietnamese immigration to the United States.</li> </ul>  |
| 1976 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nebraska passed the first <b>marital rape law</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| 1978 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pregnancy Discrimination Act</b> passed, banning discrimination against pregnant women in hiring or employment.</li> <li>• <b>The Longest Walk</b> national protest of by Native Americans.</li> </ul>   |
| 1979 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights March on Washington.</li> </ul>  |
| 1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese-American Vincent Chin was beaten to death in Detroit by unemployed autoworkers who blamed Japan's auto industry competition for US layoffs.</li> </ul>  |
| 1986 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson</b>, a Supreme Court case, identified sexual harassment as a form of job discrimination.</li> <li>• <b>Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)</b> passed by Congress, legalizing agricultural workers and making the hiring of undocumented workers illegal.</li> </ul>  |
| 1987 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ameraisan Homecoming Act</b> passed, allowing Vietnamese Amerasians to settle in the United States.</li> </ul>   |

# TIMELINE

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| 1988 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overriding presidential veto, <b>Civil Rights Restoration Act</b> passed by Congress, expanding non-discrimination laws to private institutions getting federal funding.</li> <li>• First Latino presidential cabinet member appointed, Dr. Lauro Cavazos as Secretary of Education.</li> <li>• The <b>Muslim Public Affairs Council</b> (MPAC) was created.</li> <li>• <b>Civil Liberties Act</b> passed, providing reparations and government apology to Japanese Americans interned during World War II.</li> </ul> |
| 1989 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Latino woman elected to the House of Representatives, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.</li> </ul>  |
| 1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Americans with Disabilities Act</b> passed</li> <li>• Asian Pacific American Heritage Month established.</li> </ul>   |
| 1991 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Civil Rights Act of 1991</b>, strengthened civil rights laws and allowed for damages for employment discrimination.</li> </ul>  |
| 1992 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Los Angeles, California race riots</b> broke out after white police officers were acquitted for the videotaped beating of Rodney King.</li> </ul>   |
| 1994 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Violence Against Women Act</b> passed, increasing federal penalties for sex offenders and offering training to police forces.</li> </ul>  |
| 1996 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Asian-American elected governor – Gary Locke of Washington.</li> </ul>   |



# SOCIETY POST 1945

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## Society and Federal Power Growth from 1945 in Theme Analysis

After WWII, the U.S. Cold War economy boomed along with a generation of youngsters who became the largest consumer generation of the century. As the “boomers” grew up so too did American technology, health care, advertising, business, and social attitudes. Although not without negative impacts, these aspects of society promoted a relatively decent standard of living for many, though not all, Americans. The American culture became hyper-consumeristic, where by the average American is exposed to and participates in the mass consumer culture practically every second of his or her existence.

This consumer culture was: furthered the “buy now-pay later” attitude of earlier generations; led to mass-underemployment despite perceived economic prosperity, spawned a culture of immediacy, self-gratification, and blaming others for personal failings at the expense of the community and the rights of others; led to environmental destruction and the over-exploitation of the nation’s and world’s resources; allowed for multinational corporations to exploit child and adult labor internationally. On the other side of the equation, American advances have: furthered health and medical standards around the world, provided for more access to education, goods and services, and leisure for most classes, led to scientific advances impacting the entire world, created more

service industry jobs, made the U.S. a leading computer-technologies producer, and reinforced the U.S. global economic position.

During this time, the power of the federal government to provide social (or welfare) services for the people greatly expanded. As a result of the Depression, the American public demanded and then came to expect that the role of the federal government included providing social-welfare programs. The government’s power and authority over social-economic aspects of American life increased in the years following World War Two. Although we live with the implications of these dynamics today, the full meaning of the societal changes since 1945 has yet to be realized.

## Overview of Life 1945-1950

After World War Two returning soldiers and their brides found housing at a premium. Men like William Levitt met the need for houses in suburbs such as Levittown where housing was cheap (about \$8,000) and racially segregated. In these homes white women were supposed to be content in the domestic role of wife and mother. Society emphasized marriage as the ideal role for young women. Fashions reflected the emphasis on femininity, and if a woman did not conform to the established ideal of the submissive female, she was considered ill or disturbed. Psychiatrists and popular magazines reinforced this notion, and 57% of women/ 63% of men in 1945 felt that women should not work outside the

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home. Reflecting this fact, the average age of marriage dropped. The ideal ages for marriages were 18 for women and 20 for men, and with that was birthed the “Baby Boom” of 1946 through 1957. Liberalism progressed under Truman’s administration. For example, the Fair Employment Practices Commission, created in 1941 curbed racial discrimination in war industries. Truman wanted more social security coverage, an increased minimum wage, and more WPA-type work programs. Truman also pressured for a national health care plan; however, the conservatives of the era were not interested and ended all programs deemed socialistic. Labor unions declined immediately after the war but regained strength during Eisenhower’s administration.

### Overview of Life 1950-1960

The 1950s were characterized by consumerism, relative economic prosperity, McCarthyism, increased federal spending, discrimination/racism/segregation, growing materialistic values, strict male-female roles in the domestic sphere, increased technology, rock-n-roll, suburban sprawl, and hero worship and conformity (similar to the 1920s). Harvard economist, John K. Galbraith, labeled the decade the “Affluent Society,” in his 1958 book by the same name. Broad-based prosperity dominated by the end of the decade with the GNP increasing by 50% due to heavy government spending. 60% of American families owned homes; 75% owned cars; and, 85% owned at least one television. U.S. productivity was at an all-time

high due to the Cold War’s steady, growing demand for American consumer goods and services at home and abroad. The down sides to the Affluent Society were: three recessions and a national debt by 1960 of \$290 billion. The economic growth of the 1950s put the U.S. at the highest standard of living the world had ever known. Real income increased by 35% between 1945 and 1960. And, with only 6% of the world’s population the U.S. consumed nearly 1/2 of everything made and sold on earth. Specifically, the following list of characteristics and descriptions highlight the economic and social dynamics of the decade.

- Per the theme of the class, federal spending was the major source of economic growth. Around half of it went to the defense industry.
- Electronics, computers, and gasoline were the boom industries of the decade. The Automotive, building and suburban service industries also grew. The Federal Highway Act of 1956 increased suburban development (i.e. housing and shopping malls) and mobility.
- Industries consolidated, and agribusiness grew during the era. Bureaucracies increased in all sectors of life, and white-collar workers predominated. Corporate American dictated American consumer habits and life-styles at work, home, and play.
- Materialism abounded, and Americans became ‘stuff’ hungry! The ‘keeping up with the Jones’ mentality ruled the day for many families. Advertising preyed upon people’s

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insecurities and grew as an industry, via pushing wants as needs. Advertisers specifically marketed to teenagers, and created “planned obsolescence.” Credit buying was popular again. Madison Avenue used fear, status, youth, sex-appeal, glamour, and sophistication to sell, sell, and sell. Cigarette ads went up 400% between 1945 and 1960.

- Family culture dominated. And, Dr. Spock told families how to raise babies. Boys and girls should only play in sex-appropriate ways and with gender-related toys. Most families valued leisure as an ideal. Family time included television watching, believing it was spending “quality-time” together. Church going also increased. However, ideal family images (AS SEEN ON TV) were not the norm for the majority of non-white and/or non-middle class Americans. But, the TV ideal still was to what people were expected to conform. Societal disruptions and non-conformity were either ignored or downplayed so as not to disturb or challenge idyllic suburban life.
- Hollywood, TV, and the movies were popular. Drive-ins 3D, Sci-Fi, and even Smell-o-Vision were popular. Television viewing grew at an amazing rate. In 1946, six stations existed, but by 1960, 500 stations operated. A whole industry and generation grew up around television. In 1952, “TV Guide” hit the supermarket stands, and by 1955 ABC, CBS, NBC domi-

nated the airwaves. In 1954, Americans also could purchase TV dinners and TV trays.

- Social problems and non-conformity were underneath the surface of life in the 1950s. Such disruptions normally were kept out of sight and were ignored, as much as possible. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s made that decade the most violent on the home front in the 20th century. Poverty prevailed, despite images of affluence. The youth culture had its share of juvenile delinquents. The Beats were a group of nonconformist writers and thinkers who expressed a fundamental hatred of what white, middle-class American society had become. Anything of middle class’ socioeconomic preference was labeled as “square.” Individuals like, Alen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were the intellectual leaders of the Beatniks. They were involved in the Civil Rights movement, fought injustice, and promoted the idea that people needed to find “inner directed” morals, values, and spirituality, instead of being outwardly influenced by American cultural expectations.

### Overview of Life 1960-1970

- In the 1960s the philosophy of liberalism continued. The 1960 presidential campaign ushered in the era of television campaigns, when John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon debated. Kennedy pushed his “New Frontier”

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programs as a way of fighting against tyranny, disease, poverty, and war (despite the fact that Americans were being sent to Vietnam). Kennedy pushed for more government spending, business and tax cuts, an extension of social security coverage, an increase in the minimum wage, an extension of unemployment insurance, a housing and urban renewal bill, and an education bill.

- Lyndon B. Johnson pushed his “Great Society” programs of social reform and an extension of the role of the Federal government over social welfare programs. His “War on Poverty and Injustice” extended federal control and increased federal social programs beyond what the Progressive Era presidents dreamed. LBJ’s programs lasted as the basis of the American welfare state. Some examples include: Job Corps, Head Start, more money for the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America, Appalachian Regional Development Act, Public Works and Development Act, Model City Act, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency and legislation, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Medical Care Act of 1965. This last act created Medicaid (health insurance for individuals on welfare) and Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled). The federal government paid the bills of individuals to private doctors and hospitals.
- In the 1960s youth culture radicalized. High school and college students turned activists. Baby Boomers were in college, and their campuses became the meeting ground for challenging the old order. For example, in the early 1960s at the University of Michigan, Tom Hayden and others formed the Students for a Democratic Society formed. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement, 1964-65, resulted in protests and violence at that campus. Nationally, protests of all kinds continued during the decade, especially over the Vietnam War and Civil Rights.
- The counterculture emerged in the 1960s. This social movement was a rejection of the traditional moral and social values of 1950s adults. “Don’t trust anyone over 30” became the motto of these youth, which also glorified self-indulgent, irresponsible behaviors as radical, deep, and even progressive. The movement rejected 1950s materialism, though that view was not maintained. Protests against the “establishment” were commonplace. Many individuals embraced a “free love” lifestyle. A minority of the counterculture was serious in its philosophical pursuits. True hippies dropped out of society, based on a sincere philosophical rejection of American culture. These hippies were small in number, but their dress and grooming (or lack thereof) was popularized and embraced by “hippie-wanna-be” youth, seeking to shock and rebel against their parents’ generation.

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- The anti-war movement was a serious protest movement of the era that drew support from many classes and age groups. In 1967 protesters marched on Washington D.C., and both Johnson and Nixon felt politically pressured at home and embarrassed abroad by the anti-war movement. Students for a Democratic Society led the movement by organizing a 15,000 person march on the White House. War protesters primarily were peaceful, but some were militant. And, in 1967, Johnson initiated Operation Chaos, in which federal agents infiltrated and spied on anti-war groups in order to discredit them. With the Tet Offensive the general tone of the American public shifted against the war, and in the 1968 election Vietnam was a prevalent issue. Many average Americans turned against the continuation of American involvement in Vietnam. Other aspects of the election included violent protests outside of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.
- The women's movement regrouped in the 1960s. The popular images of women in the 1960s continued to stress the ideal image of women in the home as the only choice for women in life. But, by the 1960s the reality was that the majority of women increasingly worked outside of the home, had fewer kids, and got divorced. Discrimination in the work place, or the "glass ceiling" kept women from getting access to more profitable careers and jobs. In 1963, the government classified women as an "underclass." Women earned on average 40% less than men in the same positions and were more likely to be fired or laid off. To some women the idealized role of housewife was a symbol of oppression. In 1963, Betty Friedan's publication of *The Feminine Mystique* started the era's women's rights efforts. Friedan had been an ex-psychology doctoral student who quit school to marry, have kids, and keep an ideal suburban home. In this lifestyle, she realized and then documented the fact that the majority of women to which she talked were not happy being confined to the home. Friedan argued that it was impossible for women to meet the socially idealized "feminine mystique" that promised them fulfillment in domestic roles alone. Friedan encouraged women to set their own goals, seek careers, and get out of the home.
- In 1964, the Civil Rights Act in its original version did not include the word "sex." Martha Griffiths of Michigan joined with Howard Smith of Virginia to add the word. Congress approved the bill, which prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, creed, national origins, and sex. In 1966, feminists established the National Organization for Women (NOW). Men and women supporting the equality of women in society joined this organization. Some gender feminists (radicals in the movement) called for women to shed all



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the “trappings” of the male-dominated society, which defined femininity and women’s roles. These women called marriage “legalized rape.” It’s important to note, though, that feminism in its true form is the fight for the social, economic, and political equality for all persons in society. The more radical “men-hating” groups (as they have been labeled) are gender feminists or femalists, and a distinction must be made between the two factions of the movement.

- By 1970, Americans argued over the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as a political issue. Congress designed this amendment to the Constitution in order to guarantee women equal rights under law at state and local levels. The bill passed Congress in 1972, but it did not get state ratification. Many women, such as Phyllis Schlafly opposed the ERA.
- In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that abortions in the first three months of pregnancy were legal. Some feminists and femalists supported the ruling, but many feminists were opposed to *Roe v. Wade*. The issue of equal rights for women and abortion were not necessarily the same issue, except in the media’s eyes.

### Overview of Life 1970-1980

Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter dominated the 1970s. Nixon resigned in 1974, as a result of the Watergate scandal, when his supporters burglarized the Democratic Party’s national headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. Nixon was involved in a cover-up related to the affair. Vice President Ford took office upon Nixon’s resignation. The “energy crisis” and gas-lines of the decade started as a result of the oil embargo of the western world by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. With it, for a handful of years, the public returned to and furthered environmental/conservation practices. Three Mile Island, near Harrisburg, PA, was a nuclear power plant that experienced a partial melt down and the release of radioactive gases in the area. This event led to campaigns against the use of nuclear energy. Stagflation dominated the 1970s economy. The shift of major U.S. industries to lower priced labor markets, regionally and in other countries, along with foreign competition resulted in layoffs and factory closings. Times were tough for many people. The “rust belt” of the Mid-West and Atlantic states formed during this time, since the heavy industrial mills in these areas shut down and decayed. American popular culture included the drug culture, disco, bell-bottoms, Afros, and television shows such as “M\*A\*S\*H,” the “Jefferson’s,” and Archie Bunker,” which openly editorialized on social and political issues of the era.

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At the end of the 1970s the U.S. saw its citizens held hostage in the Middle East, when Iranian fundamentalist Muslims seized the U.S. embassy. Iranians held the Americans for 444 days, and President Carter's attempt to rescue the hostages failed. Due to Canadian and Albanian diplomatic intervention, the Iranians released the hostages in 1981, which also happened to be the date of Ronald Reagan's inauguration.

## Overview of Life 1980-1990

The 1980s were dominated by the presidency of Ronald Reagan, a return to conservative values, the establishment of the New Right movement (which worked to restore family, moral values), the Moral Majority (led by televangelists), deregulation, and Reaganomics. Reaganomics (also known as trickle-down or supply-side economics) was as part of the conservative trends of the era. The idea was to stimulate the economy by reducing taxes on the wealthy, and thus increasing the amount of money available for investment. By 1983, the inflation of the 1970s had ended and unemployment decreased by 7.5%. Government spending, due to the resurgence of traditional, Cold War foreign policy during the 1980s, increased the deficit from \$31 billion to \$111 billion by the end of the decade. But, prosperity and stability gave Americans a sense of security, despite social problems such as gang violence, urban decay, AIDS, homelessness. Culturally, Americans re-embraced materialism. When the baby boomer generation of the 1960s aged, entered corporate America as “yuppies,”

and started their families, materialism and consumerism increased. Businesses focused on “the greed factor,” as it was called, and Americans focused on financial success. The end of the Cold War combined with consumer, business, and government practices resulted in a recession in the early 1990s. Other aspects of popular culture were: cable-TV, MTV, VCRs, Mexican immigration, Japanese foreign competition, continued suburbanization, mall culture, valley girls, personal computers, space shuttle fascination, trilogy movies, and even big hair and spandex (sigh).

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*

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### II. The Rise of the Suburbs

While the electric streetcar of the late-nineteenth century facilitated the outward movement of the well to do, the seeds of a suburban nation were planted in the mid-twentieth century. At the height of the Great Depression, in 1932, some 250,000 households lost their property to foreclosure. A year later, half of all U.S. mortgages were in default. The foreclosure rate stood at more than a 1,000 per day. In response, FDR's New Deal created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), which began purchasing and refinancing existing mortgages at risk of default. HOLC introduced the amortized mortgage, allowing borrowers to pay back interest and principle over twenty to thirty years instead of the then standard five-year mortgage that carried large balloon payments at the end of the contract. Though homeowners paid more for their homes under this new system, home-ownership was opened to the multitudes who could now gain residential stability, lower monthly mortgage payments, and accrue equity and wealth as property values rose over time.

Additionally, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), another New Deal organization, increased access to homeownership by insuring mortgages and protecting lenders from financial loss in the event of a default. Though only slightly more than a third of homes had an FHA backed mortgage by 1964, FHA backed loans had a ripple effect with private lenders granting more and more home loans even to non-FHA backed mortgages. Though started in the midst of the



*Levittown, early 1950s, via Flickr user markgregory.*

Great Depression, the effects of government programs and subsidies like HOLC and the FHA were fully felt in the postwar economy and fueled the growth of homeownership and the rise of the suburbs.

Though domestic spending programs like HOLC and FHA helped create the outlines of the new consumer economy, United States involvement and the Allied victory in World War II pushed the country out of depression and into a sustained economic boom. Wartime spending exploded and, after the war, sustained spending fueled further growth. Government expenditures provided loans to veterans, subsidized corporate research and development, and built the Interstate Highway System. In the decades after World War II, business boomed, unionization peaked, wages rose, and sustained growth buoyed a new consumer economy. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (The G.I. Bill), passed in 1944, offered low-interest home loans, a stipend to attend college, loans to start a business, and unemployment benefits.

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The rapid growth of homeownership and the rise of suburban communities helped drive the postwar economic boom. Builders created sprawling neighborhoods of single-family homes on the outskirts of American cities. William Levitt built the first Levittown, the prototypical suburban community, in 1946 in Long Island, New York. Purchasing large acreage, “subdividing” lots, and contracting crews to build countless homes at economies of scale, Levitt offered affordable suburban housing to veterans and their families. Levitt became the prophet of the new suburbs. His developments heralded a massive internal migration. The country’s suburban share of the population rose from 19.5% in 1940 to 30.7% by 1960. Homeownership rates rose from 44% in 1940 to almost 62% in 1960. Between 1940 and 1950, suburban communities of greater than 10,000 people grew 22.1%, and planned communities grew at an astonishing rate of 126.1%. As historian Lizabeth Cohen notes, these new suburbs “mushroomed in territorial size and the populations they harbored.” Between 1950 and 1970, America’s suburban population nearly doubled to 74 million. 83 percent of all population growth occurred in suburban places.

The postwar construction boom fed into countless industries. As manufacturers converted back to consumer goods after the war, and as the suburbs developed, appliance and automobile sales rose dramatically. Flush with rising wages and wartime savings, homeowners also used newly created



While the car had been around for decades by the 1950s, car culture really took off as a national fad during the decade. Arthur C. Base, August 1950 issue of *Science and Mechanics*. *Wikimedia*, [http://commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/File:-Car\\_of\\_the\\_Future\\_1950.jpg](http://commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/File:-Car_of_the_Future_1950.jpg).

installment plans to buy new consumer goods at once instead of saving for years to make major purchases. The mass-distribution of credit cards, first issued in 1950, further increased homeowners’ access to credit. Fueled by credit and no longer stymied by the Depression or wartime restrictions, consumers bought countless washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, and, suddenly, televisions. The percentage of Americans that owned at least one television increased from



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12% in 1950 to more than 87% in 1960. This new suburban economy also led to increased demand for automobiles. The percentage of American families owning cars increased from 54% in 1948 to 74% in 1959. Motor fuel consumption rose from some 22 million gallons in 1945 to around 59 million gallons in 1958.

The rise of the suburbs transformed America's countryside. Suburban growth claimed millions of acres of rural space and turned agrarian communities into suburban landscapes. Suburban development wrenched more and more agricultural workers off the land and often pushed them into the very cities suburbanites were busy fleeing.

The process of suburbanization drove the movement of Americans and turned the wheels of the new consumer economy. Seen from a macroeconomic level, the postwar economic boom turned America into a land of economic abundance. For advantaged buyers, loans had never been easier to attain, consumer goods had never been more accessible, and well-paying jobs had never been more abundant. And yet, beneath the aggregate numbers, patterns of racial disparity, sexual discrimination, and economic inequality persevered, undermining many of the assumptions of an Affluent Society.

In 1939 real estate appraisers arrived in sunny Pasadena, California. Armed with elaborate questionnaires to evaluate the city's building conditions, the appraisers were well-versed in the



*Black communities in cities like Detroit, Chicago, Brooklyn, and Atlanta experienced “redlining,” the process by which banks and other organizations demarcated minority neighborhoods on a map with a red line. Doing so made visible the areas they believed were unfit for their services, denying black residents loans, housing, groceries, and other necessities of modern life. Redlined Map of Greater Atlanta, <http://blog.historian4hire.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/HOLC-RedlineMap-NARA.jpg>.*

policies of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). In one neighborhood, the majority of structures were rated in “fair” repair and it was noted that there was a lack of “construction hazards or flood threats.” However, appraisers concluded that the area “is detrimentally affected by 10 owner occupant Negro families.” While “the Negroes are said to be of the better class,” the appraisers concluded, “it seems inevitable that ownership and property values will drift to lower levels.”



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While suburbanization and the new consumer economy produced unprecedented wealth and affluence, the fruits of this economic and spatial abundance did not reach all Americans equally. The new economic structures and suburban spaces of the postwar period produced perhaps as much inequality as affluence. Wealth created by the booming economy filtered through social structures with built-in privileges and prejudices. Just when many middle and lower class white American families began their journey of upward mobility by moving to the suburbs with the help of government spending and government programs such as the FHA and the GI Bill, many African Americans and other racial minorities found themselves systematically shut out.

A look at the relationship between federal organizations such as the HOLC and FHA and private banks, lenders, and real estate agents tells the story of standardized policies that produced a segregated housing market. At the core of HOLC appraisal techniques, which private parties also adopted, was the pernicious insistence that mixed-race and minority dominated neighborhoods were credit risks. In partnership with local lenders and real estate agents, HOLC created Residential Security Maps to identify high and low risk-lending areas. People familiar with the local real estate market filled out uniform surveys on each neighborhood. Relying on this information, HOLC assigned every neighborhood a letter grade from A to D and a corresponding color code. The least secure, highest risk neighborhoods for loans received



1938 Brooklyn Redline map. UrbanOasis.org via National Archives (NARA II RG 195 Entry 39 Folder "Brooklyn (Kings Co.)" Box 58). Edited by ASommer, PlanYourCity. <https://planyourcity.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/bk-map.jpg>.

a D grade and the color red. Banks refused to loan money in these “redlined” areas.

Phrases like “subversive racial elements” and “racial hazards” pervade the redlined area description files of surveyors and HOLC officials. Los Angeles’ Echo Park neighborhood, for instance, had concentrations of Japanese and African Americans and a “sprinkling of Russians and Mexicans.” The HOLC security map and survey noted that the neighborhood’s “adverse racial influences which are noticeably increasing inevitably presage lower values, rentals and a rapid decrease in residential desirability.”

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While the HOLC was a fairly short-lived New Deal agency, the influence of its security maps lived on in the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and the GI Bill dispensing Veteran's Administration (VA). Both of these government organizations, which set the standard that private lenders followed, refused to back bank mortgages that did not adhere to HOLC's security maps. On the one hand FHA and VA backed loans were an enormous boon to those who qualified for them. Millions of Americans received mortgages that they otherwise would not have qualified for. But FHA-backed mortgages were not available to all. Racial minorities could not get loans for property improvements in their own neighborhoods—seen as credit risks—and were denied mortgages to purchase property in other areas for fear that their presence would extend the red line into a new community. Levittown, the poster-child of the new suburban America, only allowed whites to purchase homes. Thus HOLC policies and private developers increased home ownership and stability for white Americans while simultaneously creating and enforcing racial segregation.

The exclusionary structures of the postwar economy prompted protest from the African Americans and other minorities that were excluded. Over time the federal government attempted to rectify the racial segregation created, or at least facilitated, in part by its own policies. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* struck down racially

restrictive neighborhood housing covenants, making it illegal to explicitly consider race when selling a house. Discrimination and segregation continued, however, and fair housing would emerge as a major plank of the brewing civil rights movement.

During the 1950s and early 1960s many Americans retreated to the suburbs to enjoy the new consumer economy and search for some normalcy and security after the instability of depression and war. But many could not. It was both the limits and opportunities of housing, then, that shaped the contours of postwar American society.

## VI. Politics and Ideology in the Affluent Society

Postwar economic prosperity and the creation of new suburban spaces inevitably shaped Americans' politics. In stark contrast to the Great Depression, the new prosperity renewed belief in the superiority of capitalism, cultural conservatism, and religion.

In the 1930s, the economic ravages of the international economic catastrophe knocked the legs out from under the intellectual justifications for keeping government out of the economy. And yet, despite the inhospitable intellectual and cultural climate, there were pockets of true believers who kept the gospel of the free market alive. The single most important was the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). In the midst of the depression,

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NAM, under the leadership of a group known as the “Brass Hats” reinvented itself and went on the offensive, initiating advertising campaigns supporting “free enterprise” and “The American Way of Life.” More importantly, NAM became a node for business leaders, such as J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil and Jasper Crane of DuPont Chemical Co., to network with like-minded individuals and take the message of free enterprise to the American people. The network of business leaders that NAM brought together in the midst of the Great Depression formed the financial, organizational and ideological underpinnings of the free market advocacy groups that emerged and found ready adherents in America’s new suburban spaces in the post-war decades.

One of the most important advocacy groups that sprang up after the war was Leonard Read’s Foundation for Economic Education. Read founded FEE in 1946 on the premise that “The American Way of Life” was essentially individualistic and that the best way to protect and promote that individualism was through libertarian economics. FEE, whose advisory board and supporters came mostly from the NAM network of Pew and Crane, became a key ideological factory, supplying businesses, service clubs, churches, schools and universities with a steady stream of libertarian literature, much of it authored by Austrian economist Ludwig Von Mises.

Shortly after FEE’s formation, Austrian economist and libertarian intellectual Friedrich Hayek

founded the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) in 1947. Unlike FEE, whose focus was more ideological in nature, the MPS’s focus on the intellectual work of promoting and improving capitalism brought together intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic in common cause. Like FEE, many of the lay supporters of the MPS, such as Pew and Jasper Crane, also came from the NAM network. The MPS successfully challenged liberal, Keynesian economics on its home turf, academia, particularly when the brilliant University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman became its president. Friedman’s willingness to advocate for and apply his libertarian economics in the political realm made him, and the MPS, one of the most influential free market advocates in the world. Together with the Chicago School of Economics, the MPS carved out a critical space in academia that legitimized the libertarian ideology so successfully evangelized by FEE, its descendant organizations, and libertarian populizers such as Ayn Rand.

Libertarian politics and evangelical religion were shaping the origins of a conservative, suburban constituency. Suburban communities’ distance from government and other top-down community-building mechanisms left a social void that evangelical churches eagerly filled. More often than not the theology and ideology of these churches reinforced socially conservative views while simultaneously reinforcing congregates’ belief in economic individualism. These new communities and the suburban ethos of individualism that accompanied

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them became the building blocks for a new political movement. And yet, while the growing suburbs, and the conservative ideology that found a ready home there, eventually proved immensely important in American political life, their impact was not immediately felt. They did not yet have a champion.

In the post-World War II years the Republican Party faced a fork in the road. Its complete lack of electoral success since the Depression led to a battle within the party about how to revive its electoral prospects. The more conservative faction, represented by Ohio Senator Robert Taft (son of former President William Howard Taft) and backed by many party activists and financiers such as J. Howard Pew, sought to take the party further to the right, particularly in economic matters, by rolling back New Deal programs and policies. On the other hand, the more moderate wing of the party led by men such as New York Governor Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller sought to embrace and reform New Deal programs and policies. There were further disagreements among party members about how involved the United States should be in the world. Issues such as foreign aid, collective security, and how best to fight Communism divided the party.

Initially, the moderates, or “liberals,” won control of the party with the nomination of Thomas Dewey in 1948. Dewey’s shocking loss to Truman, however, emboldened conservatives, who rallied around Taft as the 1952 presidential primaries approached. With the conservative banner riding high in the party,



*Just like the internet, don't always trust what you read in newspapers. This obviously incorrect banner from the front page of the Chicago Tribune on November 3, 1948 made its own headlines as the newspaper's most embarrassing gaff. Photograph, 1948. <http://media-2.web.britannica.com/eb-media/14/65214-050-D86AAA4E.jpg>.*

General Dwight Eisenhower, most recently NATO supreme commander, felt obliged to join the race in order to beat back the conservatives and “prevent one of our great two Parties from adopting a course which could lead to national suicide.” In addition to his fear that Taft and the conservatives would undermine collective security arrangements such as NATO, he also berated the “neanderthals” in his party for their anti-New Deal stance. Eisenhower felt that the best way to stop Communism was to undercut its appeal by alleviating the conditions under which it was most attractive. That meant supporting New Deal programs. There was also a political calculus to Eisenhower’s position. He observed, “Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history.”

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The primary contest between Taft and Eisenhower was close and controversial, with Taft supporters claiming that Eisenhower stole the nomination from Taft at the convention. Eisenhower, attempting to placate the conservatives in his party picked California Congressman and virulent anti-Communist Richard Nixon as his running mate. With the Republican nomination sewn up, the immensely popular Eisenhower swept to victory in the 1952 general election, easily besting Truman's hand-picked successor, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower's popularity boosted Republicans across the country, leading them to majorities in both houses of Congress.

The Republican sweep in the 1952 election proved less momentous than its supporters hoped. Eisenhower's popularity helped elect a congress that was more conservative than he had hoped. Within two years of his election, Eisenhower saw his legislative proposals routinely defeated by an unlikely alliance of conservative Republicans, who thought Eisenhower was going too far, and liberal Democrats, who thought he was not going far enough. For example, in 1954 Eisenhower proposed a national Health Care plan that would have provided Federal support for increasing health care coverage across the nation without getting the government directly involved in regulating the health care industry. The proposal was defeated in the house by a 238-134 vote with a swing bloc of 75 conservative Republicans joining liberal Democrats voting against the plan. Eisenhower's

proposals in education and agriculture often suffered similar defeats. By the end of his presidency, Ike's domestic legislative achievements were largely limited to expanding social security, making Housing, Education and Welfare (HEW) a cabinet position, passing the National Defense Education Act, and bolstering federal support to education, particularly in math and science.

Like any president, Eisenhower's record was as much about his impact outside of the legislative arena. Ike's "Middle-of-the-Road" philosophy guided his foreign as much as his domestic policy. Indeed, like his attempts to use federal dollars to give state and local governments as well as individuals the power to act at home, his foreign policy sought to keep the United States from intervening abroad by bolstering its allies. Thus Ike funneled money to the French in Vietnam fighting the Ho Chi Minh led Communists, walked a tight line between helping Chiang Kai-Shek's Taiwan without overtly provoking Mao Tse-Tung's China, and materially backed native actors who destabilized "unfriendly" governments in Iran and Guatemala. The centerpiece of Ike's foreign policy was "massive retaliation," or the threat of nuclear force in the face of Communist expansion, thus getting more "bang" for his government "buck." While Ike's "mainstream" "middle-way" won broad popular support, his own party was slowly moving away from his positions. By 1964 the party had moved far enough to the Right to nominate Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, the most



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conservative candidate in a generation. The political moderation of the Affluent Society proved little more than a way station on the road to liberal reform and a future conservative ascendancy.

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## THE SIXTIES

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### V. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

On a May morning in 1964, President Johnson laid out a sweeping vision for a package of domestic reforms known as the Great Society. Speaking before that year's graduates of the University of Michigan, Johnson called for "an end to poverty and racial injustice" and challenged both the graduates and American people to "enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization." At its heart, he promised, the Great Society would uplift racially and economically disfranchised Americans, too long denied access to federal guarantees of equal democratic and economic opportunity, while simultaneously raising all Americans' standards and quality of life.

The Great Society's legislation was breathtaking in scope, and many of its programs and agencies are still with us today. Most importantly, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 codified federal support for many of the civil rights movement's goals by prohibiting job discrimination, abolishing the segregation of public accommodations, and providing vigorous federal oversight of southern states' primary and general election laws in order to guarantee minority access to the ballot. Ninety years after Reconstruction, these measures effectively ended Jim Crow.

In addition to civil rights, the Great Society took on a range of quality of life concerns that seemed suddenly solvable in a society of such affluence. It established the first federal Food Stamp Program. Medicare and Medicaid would ensure access to quality medical care for the aged and poor. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was the first sustained and significant federal investment in public education, totaling more than \$1 billion. Significant funds were poured into colleges and universities. The Great Society also established the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, federal investments in arts and letters that fund American cultural expression to this day.

While these programs persisted and even thrived, in the years immediately following this flurry of legislative activity, the national conversation surrounding Johnson's domestic agenda largely focused on the \$3 billion spent on War on Poverty programming within the Great Society's Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. No EOA program was more controversial than Community Action, considered the cornerstone antipoverty program. Johnson's antipoverty planners felt the key to uplifting disfranchised and impoverished Americans was involving poor and marginalized citizens in the actual administration of poverty programs, what they called "maximum feasible participation." Community Action Programs would give disfranchised Americans a seat at the table in planning and executing

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federally funded programs that were meant to benefit themselves—a significant sea change in the nation’s efforts to confront poverty, which had historically relied upon local political and business elites or charitable organizations for administration.

In fact, Johnson himself had never conceived of poor Americans running their own poverty programs. While the president’s rhetoric offered a stirring vision of the future, he had singularly old-school notions for how his poverty policies would work. In contrast to “maximum feasible participation,” the President imagined a second New Deal: local elite-run public works camps that would instill masculine virtues in unemployed young men. Community Action almost entirely bypassed local administrations and sought to build grassroots civil rights and community advocacy organizations, many of which had originated in the broader civil rights movement. Despite widespread support for most Great Society programs, the War on Poverty increasingly became the focal point of domestic criticisms from the left and right. On the left, frustrated liberals recognized the president’s resistance to empowering minority poor and also assailed the growing war in Vietnam, the cost of which undercut domestic poverty spending. As racial unrest and violence swept across urban centers, critics from the right lambasted federal spending for “unworthy” and even criminal citizens.

Johnson had secured a series of meaningful civil rights laws, but then things began to stall. Days

after the ratification of the Voting Rights Act, race riots broke out in the Watts District of Los Angeles. Rioting in Watts stemmed from local African American frustrations with residential segregation, police brutality, and racial profiling. Waves of riots would rock American cities every summer thereafter. Particularly destructive riots occurred in 1967—two summers later—in Newark and Detroit. Each resulted in deaths, injuries, arrests, and millions of dollars in property damage. In spite of black achievements, inner-city problems persisted for many African Americans. The phenomenon of “white flight”—when whites in metropolitan areas fled city centers for the suburbs—often resulted in “re-segregated” residential patterns. Limited access to economic and social opportunities in urban areas bred discord. In addition to reminding the nation that the civil rights movement was a complex, ongoing event without a concrete endpoint, the unrest in northern cities reinforced the notion that the struggle did not occur solely in the South. Many Americans also viewed the riots as an indictment of the Great Society, President Johnson’s sweeping agenda of domestic programs that sought to remedy inner-city ills by offering better access to education, jobs, medical care, housing, and other forms of social welfare. The civil rights movement was never the same.

Despite the fact that the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts and the War on Poverty provoked conservative resistance and were crucial catalysts for the rise of Republicans in the South and West, subsequent

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presidents and Congresses have left largely intact the bulk of the Great Society. Many of its programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, federal spending for arts and literature, and Head Start, are considered by many to be effective forms of government action. Even Community Action programs, so fraught during their few short years of activity, inspired and empowered a new generation of minority and poverty community activists who had never before felt, as one put it, “this government is with us.”

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# THE AMERICAN YAWP

## THE UNRAVELING

### VI. Deindustrialization and the Rise of the Sunbelt

American Workers had made substantial material gains throughout the 1940s and 1950s. During the so-called “Great Compression,” Americans of all classes benefited from postwar prosperity. Segregation and discrimination perpetuated racial and gender inequalities, but unemployment continually fell and a highly progressive tax system and powerful unions lowered general income inequality as working class standards-of-living nearly doubled between 1947 and 1973.

But, general prosperity masked deeper vulnerabilities. Perhaps no case better illustrates the decline of American industry and the creation of an intractable “urban crisis” than Detroit. As the automobile industry expanded and especially as the United States transitioned to a wartime economy during World War II, Detroit boomed. When auto manufacturers like Ford and General Motors converted their assembly lines to build machines for the American war effort, observers dubbed the city the “arsenal of democracy.”

After the war, however, automobile firms began closing urban factories and moving to outlying suburbs. Several factors fueled the process. Some cities partly deindustrialized themselves. Municipal governments in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia banished light industry to make room for high-rise apartments and office buildings.



*Abandoned Youngstown factory, via Flickr user stu\_spivack.*

Mechanization also contributed to the decline of American labor. A manager at a newly automated Ford engine plant in postwar Cleveland captured the interconnections between these concerns when he glibly noted to United Automobile Workers (UAW) president Walter Reuther, “you are going to have trouble collecting union dues from all of these machines.” More importantly, however, manufacturing firms sought to lower labor costs by automating, downsizing, and relocating to areas with “business friendly” policies like low tax rates, anti-union “right-to-work” laws, and low wages.

Detroit began to bleed industrial jobs. Between 1950 and 1958, Chrysler, who actually kept more jobs in Detroit than either Ford or General Motors, cut its Detroit production workforce in half. In the years between 1953 and 1960, East Detroit lost ten plants and over seventy-one thousand jobs. Because Detroit was a single-industry city, decisions made by the “Big Three” automakers reverberated across the city’s industrial landscape. When auto companies mechanized or moved their operations, ancillary suppliers like machine tool companies were cut out



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of the supply chain and likewise forced to cut their own workforce. Between 1947 and 1977, the number of manufacturing firms in the city dropped from over three thousand to fewer than two thousand. The labor force was gutted. Manufacturing jobs fell from 338,400 to 153,000 over the same three decades.

Industrial restructuring decimated all workers, but deindustrialization fell heaviest on the city's African Americans. Although many middle class blacks managed to move out of the city's ghettos, by 1960, 19.7 percent of black autoworkers in Detroit were unemployed, compared to just 5.8 percent of whites. Overt discrimination in housing and employment had for decades confined blacks to segregated neighborhoods where they were forced to pay exorbitant rents for slum housing. Subject to residential intimidation and cut off from traditional sources of credit, few blacks could afford to follow industry as it left the city for the suburbs and other parts of the country, especially the South. Segregation and discrimination kept them stuck where there were fewer and fewer jobs. Over time, Detroit devolved into a mass of unemployment, crime, and crippled municipal resources. When riots rocked Detroit in 1967, 25 to 30 percent of blacks between age eighteen and twenty-four were unemployed.

Deindustrialization in Detroit and elsewhere also went hand in hand with the long assault on unionization that began in the aftermath of World War II. Lacking the political support they had enjoyed during the

New Deal years, unions such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) shifted tactics and accepted labor-management accords in which cooperation, not agitation, was the strategic objective.

This accord held mixed results for workers. On the one hand, management encouraged employee loyalty through privatized welfare systems that offered workers health benefits and pensions. Grievance arbitration and collective bargaining also provided workers official channels through which to criticize policies and push for better conditions. At the same time, bureaucracy and corruption increasingly weighed down unions and alienated them from workers and the general public. Union management came to hold primary influence in what was ostensibly a “pluralistic” power relationship. Workers—though still willing to protest—by necessity pursued a more moderate agenda compared to the union workers of the 1930s and 40s. Conservative politicians meanwhile seized on popular suspicions of “Big Labor,” stepping up their criticism of union leadership and positioning themselves as workers’ true ally.

While conservative critiques of union centralization did much to undermine the labor movement, labor’s decline also coincided with ideological changes within American liberalism. Labor and its political concerns undergirded Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition, but by the 1960s, many liberals had

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forsaken working class politics. More and more saw poverty as stemming not from structural flaws in the national economy, but from the failure of individuals to take full advantage of the American system.

Roosevelt's New Deal might have attempted to rectify unemployment with government jobs, but Johnson's Great Society and its imitators funded government-sponsored job training, even in places without available jobs. Union leaders in the 1950s and 1960s typically supported such programs and philosophies.

Internal racism also weakened the labor movement. While national CIO leaders encouraged black unionization in the 1930s, white workers on the ground often opposed the integrated shop. In Detroit and elsewhere after World War II, white workers participated in "hate strikes" where they walked off the job rather than work with African Americans. White workers similarly opposed residential integration, fearing, among other things, that black newcomers would lower property values.

By the mid-1970s, widely-shared postwar prosperity leveled off and began to retreat. Growing international competition, technological inefficiency, and declining productivity gains stunted working- and middle-class wages. As the country entered recession, wages decreased and the pay gap between workers and management began its long widening. At the same time, dramatic increases in mass incarceration coincided with the deregulation of prison labor to

allow more private companies access to cheaper inmate labor, a process that, whatever its aggregate impact, impacted local communities where free jobs were moved into prisons. The tax code became less progressive and labor lost its foothold in the marketplace. Unions represented a third of the workforce in the 1950s, but only one in ten workers belonged to one as of 2015.

Geography dictated much of labor's fall, as American firms fled pro-labor states in the 1970s and 1980s. Some went overseas in the wake of new trade treaties to exploit low-wage foreign workers, but others turned to anti-union states in the South and West stretching from Virginia to Texas to southern California. Factories shuttered in the North and Midwest, leading commentators by the 1980s to dub America's former industrial heartland the "Rust Belt." With this, they contrasted the prosperous and dynamic "Sun Belt."

Coined by journalist Kevin Phillips in 1969, the "Sun Belt" refers to the swath of southern and western states that saw unprecedented economic, industrial, and demographic growth after World War II. During the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the American South "the nation's No. 1 economic problem" and injected massive federal subsidies, investments, and military spending into the region. During the Cold War, Sun Belt politicians lobbied hard for military installations and government contracts for their states.

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Meanwhile, southern states' hostility toward organized labor beckoned corporate leaders. The Taft-Hartley Act in 1949 facilitated southern states' frontal assault on unions. Thereafter, cheap, nonunionized labor, low wages, and lax regulations pulled northern industries away from the Rust Belt. Skilled northern workers followed the new jobs southward and westward, lured by cheap housing and a warm climate slowly made more tolerable by modern air conditioning.

The South attracted business but struggled to share their profits. Middle class whites grew prosperous, but often these were recent transplants, not native southerners. As the cotton economy shed farmers and laborers, poor white and black southerners found themselves mostly excluded from the fruits of the Sun Belt. Public investments were scarce. White southern politicians channeled federal funding away from primary and secondary public education and toward high-tech industry and university-level research. The Sun Belt inverted Rust Belt realities: the South and West had growing numbers of high-skill, high-wage jobs but lacked the social and educational infrastructure needed to train native poor and middle-class workers for those jobs.

Regardless, more job meant more people, and by 1972, southern and western Sun Belt states had more electoral votes than the Northeast and Midwest. This gap continues to grow. Though the region's economic

and political ascendance was a product of massive federal spending, New Right politicians who constructed an identity centered on "small government" found their most loyal support in the Sun Belt. These business-friendly politicians successfully synthesized conservative Protestantism and free-market ideology, creating a potent new political force. Housewives organized reading groups in their homes, and from those reading groups sprouted new organized political activities. Prosperous and mobile, old and new suburbanites gravitated towards an individualistic vision of free enterprise espoused by the Republican Party. Some, especially those most vocally anti-communist, joined groups like the Young Americans for Freedom and the John Birch Society. Less radical suburban voters, however, still gravitated towards the more moderate brand of conservatism promoted by Richard Nixon.

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# THE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT

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## I. Introduction

Speaking to Detroit autoworkers in October of 1980, Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan described what he saw as the American Dream under Democratic President Jimmy Carter. The family garage may have still held two cars, cracked Reagan, but they were “both Japanese and they’re out of gas.” The charismatic former governor of California suggested that a once-proud nation was running on empty, economically and politically outpaced by foreign competitors. But Reagan held out hope for redemption. Stressing the theme of “national decline,” he nevertheless promised to make the United States once again a glorious “city upon a hill.” In November, Reagan’s vision of a dark present and a bright future triumphed.

Reagan rode the wave of a powerful political movement often referred to as the “New Right,” in contrast to the more moderate brand of conservatism prevalent after World War II. By the 1980s the New Right had evolved into the most influential wing of the Republican Party and could claim significant credit for its electoral success. The conservative ascendancy built upon the gradual unraveling of the New Deal political order during the 1960s and 1970s. It enjoyed the guidance of skilled politicians like Reagan but drew tremendous energy from a broad range of grassroots activists. Countless ordinary citizens—newly mobilized Christian conservatives, in particular—helped the Republican Party steer the country onto a rightward course. The New Right

also attracted support from “Reagan Democrats,” blue-collar voters who had lost faith in the old liberal creed. All the while, enduring conflicts over race, economic policy, gender and sexual politics, and foreign affairs fatally fractured the liberal consensus that had dominated American politics since the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt.

The rise of the right affected Americans’ everyday lives in numerous ways. The Reagan administration embraced “free market” economic theory, dispensing with the principles of income redistribution and social welfare spending that had animated the New Deal and Great Society. Conservative policymakers tilted the regulatory and legal landscape of the United States toward corporations and wealthy individuals. This project depended foremost on weakening the “rights” framework that had undergirded advancements by African Americans, Latinos and Latinas, women, lesbians and gays, and other marginalized groups.

In many ways, however, the rise of the right promised more than it delivered. Battered but intact, the social welfare programs of the New Deal and Great Society (Social Security, Medicaid, Aid to Families With Dependent Children) survived the 1980s. Despite Republican vows of fiscal discipline, both the federal government and the national debt ballooned. At the end of the decade, conservative Christians viewed popular culture as more vulgar and hostile to their values than ever before. In the near term, the New Right registered only partial victories on a range of public policies and cultural issues. Yet, from a long-

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term perspective conservatives achieved a subtler and more enduring transformation of American politics and society. In the words of one historian, the conservative movement successfully “changed the terms of debate and placed its opponents on the defensive.” Liberals and their programs and their policies did not disappear, but they increasingly fought battles on terrain chosen by the New Right.

## II. Conservative Ascendancy

The “Reagan Revolution” marked the culmination of a long process of political mobilization on the American right. In the first two decades after World War II the New Deal seemed firmly embedded in American electoral politics and public policy. Even two-term Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower declined to roll back the welfare state. To be sure, William F. Buckley tapped into a deep vein of elite conservatism in 1955 by announcing in the first issue of *National Review* that his magazine “stands athwart history yelling Stop.” Senator Joseph McCarthy and John Birch Society founder Robert Welch stirred anti-communist fervor. But in general, the far right lacked organizational cohesion. Following Lyndon Johnson’s resounding defeat of Republican standard-bearer Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election, many observers declared American conservatism finished. *New York Times* columnist James Reston wrote that Goldwater had “wrecked his party for a long time to come.”

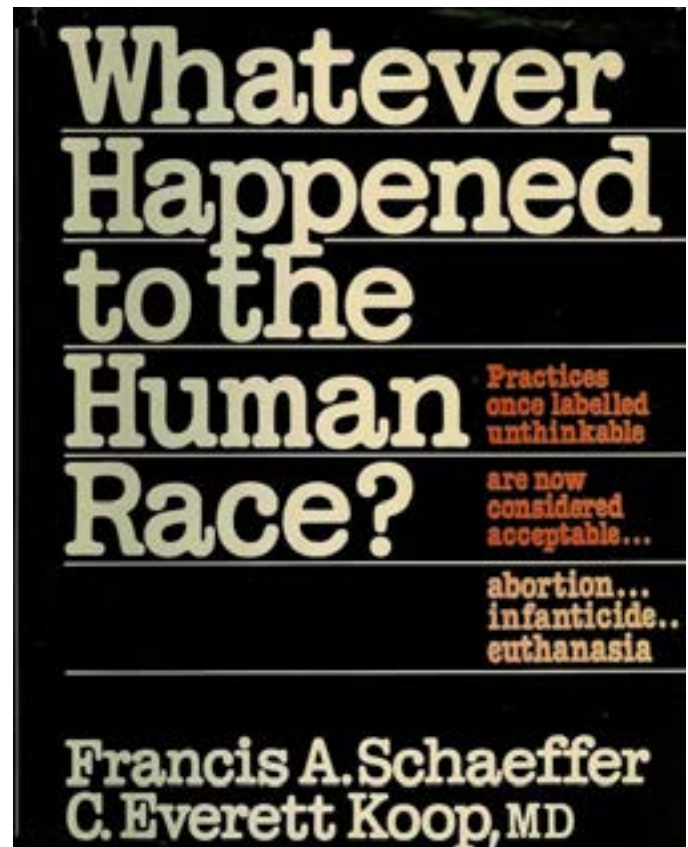
The Conservative insurgency occurred within both major political parties, but the New Right gradually coalesced under the Republican tent. The heightened appeal of conservatism had several causes. The expansive social and economic agenda of Johnson’s Great Society reminded anti-communists of Soviet-style central planning and enflamed fiscal conservatives worried about deficits. Race also drove the creation of the New Right. The civil rights movement, along with the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, upended the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South. All of these occurred under Democratic leadership, pushing the South toward the Republican Party. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black Power, affirmative action, and court-ordered busing of children between schools to achieve racial balance brought “white backlash” to the North, often in cities previously known for political liberalism. To many ordinary white Americans, the urban rebellions, antiwar protests, and student uprisings of the late 1960s unleashed social chaos. At the same time, declining wages, rising prices, and growing tax burdens brought economic vulnerability to many working- and middle-class citizens who long formed the core of the New Deal coalition. Liberalism no longer seemed to offer the great mass of white Americans a roadmap to prosperity, so they searched for new political solutions.

Former Alabama governor and conservative Democrat George Wallace masterfully exploited the racial, cultural, and economic resentments of



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working-class whites during his presidential runs in 1968 and 1972. Wallace's record as a staunch segregationist made him a hero in the Deep South, where he won five states as a third-party candidate in the 1968 general election. Wallace's populist message also resonated with blue-collar voters in the industrial North who felt left behind by the rights revolution. On the campaign stump, the fiery candidate lambasted hippies, anti-war protesters, and government bureaucrats. He assailed female welfare recipients for "breeding children as a cash crop" and ridiculed "over-educated, ivory-tower" intellectuals who "don't know how to park a bicycle straight." Yet, Wallace also advanced progressive proposals for federal job training programs, a minimum wage hike, and legal protections for collective bargaining. Running as a Democrat in 1972 (and with anti-busing rhetoric as a new arrow in his quiver), Wallace captured the Michigan primary and polled second in the industrial heartland of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. In May 1972 an assassin's bullet left Wallace paralyzed and ended his campaign. Nevertheless, his amalgamation of older, New Deal-style proposals and conservative populism emblemized the rapid re-ordering of party loyalties in the late '60s and early '70s. Richard Nixon similarly harnessed the new right's sense of grievance through his rhetoric about "law and order" and the "silent majority." But Nixon and his Republican successor, Gerald Ford, continued to accommodate the politics of the New Deal order. The new right remained restive.



*This book cover succinctly demonstrates the mindset of many conservatives in the Reagan era: what happened to the human race? <http://users.aber.ac.uk/jrl/scan0001.jpg>.*

Christian conservatives also felt themselves under siege from liberalism. In the early 1960s, the Supreme Court decisions prohibiting teacher-led prayer (*Engel v. Vitale*) and Bible reading in public schools (*Abington v. Schempp*) led some on the right to conclude that a liberal judicial system threatened Christian values. In the following years, the counterculture's celebration sex and drugs, along with relaxed obscenity and pornography laws, intensified the conviction that "permissive" liberalism encouraged immorality in private life. Evangelical Protestants—Christians who professed a personal

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relationship with Jesus Christ, upheld the Bible as an infallible source of truth, and felt a duty to convert, or evangelize, nonbelievers—comprised the core of the so-called “religious right.” The movement also drew energy from devout Catholics. The development of the religious right was not inevitable for several reasons. First, many evangelicals had for decades eschewed politics in favor of spiritual matters; moreover, evangelicalism did not necessarily lead to conservative politics (Democrat Jimmy Carter was an evangelical). Second, working-class Roman Catholics had a long record of loyalty to the Democratic Party. Third, the alliance between evangelicals and Catholics had to overcome decades of mutual antagonism. Only the common enemy of liberalism brought the groups together.

With increasing assertiveness in the 1960s and 1970s, Christian conservatives mobilized to protect the “traditional” family. Women comprised a striking number of the religious right’s foot soldiers. In 1968 and 1969 a group of newly politicized mothers in Anaheim, California led a sustained protest against sex education in public schools. The successful campaign of these “suburban warriors” reflected a widespread belief among Christian conservatives that permissive liberal morality, often emanating from public institutions, threatened their children. A number of other issues also stirred conservative women. Catholic activist Phyllis Schlafly marshaled opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, while evangelical pop singer Anita Bryant drew national

headlines for her successful fight to repeal Miami’s gay rights ordinance in 1977. In 1979, Beverly LaHaye (whose husband Tim—an evangelical pastor in San Diego—would later co-author the wildly popular *Left Behind* Christian book series) founded Concerned Women for America, which linked small groups of local activists opposed to the ERA, abortion, homosexuality, and no-fault divorce.

Activists like Schlafly and LaHaye valorized motherhood as the highest calling of all women. Abortion therefore struck at the core of their female identity. More than perhaps any other issue, abortion drew different segments of the religious right—Catholics and Protestants, women and men—together. The Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling outraged many devout Catholics, including Long Island housewife and political novice Ellen McCormack. In 1976, McCormack entered the Democratic presidential primaries in an unsuccessful attempt to steer the party to a pro-life position. *Roe v. Wade* also intensified anti-abortion sentiment among many evangelicals (who had been less universally opposed to the procedure than their Catholic counterparts). Christian author Francis Schaeffer cultivated evangelical opposition to abortion through the 1979 documentary film *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* arguing that the “fate of the unborn is the fate of the human race.” With the procedure framed in stark, existential terms, many evangelicals felt compelled to combat the procedure through political action.

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Grassroots passion drove anti-abortion activism, but a set of religious and secular institutions turned the various strands of the New Right into a sophisticated movement. In 1979 Jerry Falwell—a Baptist minister and religious broadcaster from Lynchburg, Virginia—founded the Moral Majority, an explicitly political organization dedicated to advancing a “pro-life, pro-family, pro-morality, and pro-American” agenda. The Moral Majority skillfully weaved together social and economic appeals to make itself a force in Republican politics. Secular, business-oriented institutions also joined the attack on liberalism, fueled by stagflation and by the federal government’s creation of new regulatory agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Conservative business leaders bankrolled new “think tanks” like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. These organizations provided grassroots activists with ready-made policy prescriptions. Other business leaders took a more direct approach by hiring Washington lobbyists and creating Political Action Committees (PACs) to press their agendas in the halls of Congress and federal agencies. Between 1976 and 1980 the number of corporate PACs rose from under 300 to over 1200.

Grassroots activists and business leaders received unlikely support from a circle of “neoconservatives”—disillusioned intellectuals who had rejected liberalism and the Left and

become Republicans. Irving Kristol, a former Marxist who went on to champion free-market capitalism as a *Wall Street Journal* columnist, defined a neoconservative as a “liberal who has been mugged by reality.” Neoconservative journals like *Commentary* and *Public Interest* argued that the Great Society had proven counterproductive, perpetuating the poverty and racial segregation that it aimed to cure. By the middle of the 1970s, neoconservatives felt mugged by foreign affairs as well. As ardent Cold Warriors, they argued that Nixon’s policy of détente left the United States vulnerable to the Soviet Union.

In sum, several streams of conservative political mobilization converged in the late 1970s. Each wing of the burgeoning New Right—disaffected Northern blue-collar workers, white Southerners, evangelicals and devout Catholics, business leaders, disillusioned intellectuals, and Cold War hawks—turned to the Republican Party as the most effective vehicle for their political counter-assault on liberalism and the New Deal political order. After years of mobilization, the domestic and foreign policy catastrophes of the Carter administration provided the head winds that brought the conservative movement to shore.

## III. The Conservatism of the Carter Years

The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 brought a Democrat to the White House for the first time since 1969.

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Large Democratic majorities in Congress provided the new president with an opportunity to move aggressively on the legislative front. With the infighting of the early 1970s behind them, many Democrats hoped the Carter administration would update and expand the New Deal. But Carter won the presidency on a wave of post-Watergate disillusionment with government that did not translate into support for liberal ideas. Events outside Carter's control certainly helped discredit liberalism, but the president's own policies also pushed national politics further to the right. In his 1978 State of the Union address, Carter lectured Americans that "[g]overnment cannot solve our problems...it cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy." The statement neatly captured the ideological transformation of the country. Rather than leading a resurgence of American liberalism, Carter became, as one historian put it, "the first president to govern in a post-New Deal framework."

In its early days the Carter administration embraced several policies backed by liberals. It pushed an economic stimulus package containing \$4 billion in public works, extended food stamp benefits to 2.5 million new recipients, enlarged the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income households, and expanded the Nixon-era Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). But the White House quickly realized that Democratic control of Congress did not guarantee support for its initially left-leaning

economic proposals. Many of the Democrats elected to Congress in the aftermath of Watergate were more moderate than their predecessors who had been catechized in the New Deal gospel. These conservative Democrats sometimes partnered with Congressional Republicans to oppose Carter, most notably in response to the administration's proposal for a federal office of consumer protection.

At a deeper level, Carter's own temperamental and philosophical conservatism hamstrung the administration. Early in his first term, Carter began to worry about the size of the federal deficit and killed a tax rebate he had proposed and Congressional Democrats had embraced. The president's comprehensive national urban policy veered to the right by transferring many programs to state and local governments, relying on privatization, and endorsing voluntarism and self-help. Organized labor felt abandoned by Carter, who remained cool to several of their highest legislative priorities. The president offered tepid support for national health insurance proposal and declined to lobby aggressively for a package of modest labor law reforms. The business community rallied to defeat the latter measure, in what AFL-CIO chief George Meany described as "an attack by every anti-union group in America to kill the labor movement." In 1977 and 1978, liberal Democrats rallied behind the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act, which promised to end unemployment through extensive government planning. The bill aimed not only to guarantee a job

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to every American but also to re-unite the interracial, working-class Democratic coalition that had been fractured by deindustrialization and affirmative action. “We must create a climate of shared interests between the needs, the hopes, and the fears of the minorities, and the needs, the hopes, and the fears of the majority,” wrote Senator Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson’s vice president and the bill’s co-sponsor. Carter’s lack of enthusiasm for the proposal allowed conservatives from both parties to water down the bill to a purely symbolic gesture. Liberals, like labor leaders, came to regard the president as an unreliable ally.

Carter also came under fire from Republicans, especially the religious right. His administration incurred the wrath of evangelicals in 1978 when the Internal Revenue Service established new rules revoking the tax-exempt status of racially segregated, private Christian schools. The rules only strengthened a policy instituted by the Nixon administration; however, the religious right accused Carter of singling out Christian institutions. Republican activist Richard Viguerie described the IRS controversy as the “spark that ignited the religious right’s involvement in real politics.” Race sat just below the surface of the IRS fight. After all, many of the schools had been founded to circumvent court-ordered desegregation. But the IRS ruling allowed the New Right to rain down fire on big government interference while downplaying the practice of racial exclusion at the heart of the case.

While the IRS controversy flared, economic crises multiplied. Unemployment reached 7.8% in May 1980, up from 6% at the start of Carter’s first term. Inflation (the rate at which the cost of good and services increases) jumped from 6% in 1978 to a staggering 20% by the winter of 1980. In another bad omen, the iconic Chrysler Corporation appeared close to bankruptcy. The administration responded to these challenges in fundamentally conservative ways. First, Carter proposed a tax cut for the upper-middle class, which Congress passed in 1978. Second, the White House embraced a long-time goal of the conservative movement by deregulating the airline and trucking industries in 1978 and 1980, respectively. Third, Carter proposed balancing the federal budget—much to the dismay of liberals, who would have preferred that he use deficit spending to finance a *new* New Deal. Finally, to halt inflation, Carter turned to Paul Volcker, his appointee as Chair of the Federal Reserve. Volcker raised interest rates and tightened the money supply—policies designed to reduce inflation in the long run but which increased unemployment in the short run. Liberalism was on the run.

The “energy crisis” in particular brought out the Southern Baptist moralist in Carter. On July 15, 1979, the president delivered a nationally televised speech on energy policy in which he attributed the country’s economic woes to a “crisis of confidence.” Carter lamented that “too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption.” The president’s



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push to reduce energy consumption was reasonable, and the country's initial response to the speech was favorable. Yet Carter's emphasis on discipline and sacrifice, his spiritual diagnosis for economic hardship, sidestepped deeper questions of large-scale economic change and downplayed the harsh toll of inflation on regular Americans.

### IV. The Election of 1980

These domestic challenges, combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the hostage crisis in Iran, hobbled Carter heading into his 1980 reelection campaign. Many Democrats were dismayed by his policies. The president of the International Association of Machinists dismissed Carter as "the best Republican President since Herbert Hoover." Angered by the White House's refusal to back national health insurance, Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy challenged Carter in the Democratic primaries. Running as the party's liberal standard-bearer and heir to the legacy of his slain older brothers, Kennedy garnered support from key labor unions and leftwing Democrats. He won the Michigan and Pennsylvania primaries—states where Democrats had embraced George Wallace eight years earlier. Carter ultimately vanquished Kennedy, but the close primary tally betrayed the president's vulnerability.

Carter's opponent in the general election was Ronald Reagan, who ran as a staunch fiscal conservative and a Cold War hawk. He vowed to reduce government



*Jerry Falwell, the wildly popular TV evangelist, founded the Moral Majority political organization in the late 1970s. Decrying the demise of the nation's morality, the organization gained a massive following, helping to cement the status of the New Christian Right in American politics. Photograph, date unknown. [Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerry\\_Falwell\\_portrait.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerry_Falwell_portrait.jpg).*

spending and shrink the federal bureaucracy while eliminating the departments of Energy and Education that Carter created. As in his 1976 primary challenge to Gerald Ford, Reagan accused his opponent of failing to confront the Soviet Union. The GOP candidate vowed steep increases in military spending, and hammered Carter for canceling the B-1 bomber and signing the Panama Canal and Salt II treaties. Carter responded by labeling Reagan a warmonger,

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but events in Afghanistan and Iran discredited Carter's foreign policy in the eyes of many Americans.

The incumbent fared no better on domestic affairs. Unemployment remained at nearly 8%. Meanwhile the Federal Reserve's anti-inflation measures pushed interest rates to an unheard-of 18.5%. Reagan seized on these bad economic trends. On the campaign trail he brought down the house by proclaiming: "A recession is when your neighbor loses his job, and a depression is when you lose your job." Reagan would then pause before concluding, "And a recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his job." Carter reminded voters that his opponent opposed the creation of Medicare in 1965 and warned that Reagan would slash popular programs if elected. But the anemic economy prevented Carter's blows from landing.

Social and cultural issues presented yet another challenge for the president. Despite Carter's background as a "born-again" Christian and Sunday school teacher, he struggled to court the religious right. Carter scandalized devout Christians by admitting to lustful thoughts during an interview with *Playboy* magazine in 1976, telling the reporter he had "committed adultery in my heart many times." Although Reagan was only a nominal Christian and rarely attended church, the religious right embraced him. Reverend Jerry Falwell directed the full weight of the Moral Majority behind Reagan. The organization registered an estimated 2 million new voters in 1980. Ellen McCormack, the New York

Catholic who ran for president as a Democrat on an anti-abortion platform in 1976, moved over to the GOP in 1980. Reagan also cultivated the religious right by denouncing abortion and endorsing prayer in school. The IRS tax exemption issue resurfaced as well, with the 1980 Republican platform vowing to "halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter's IRS commissioner against independent schools." Early in the primary season, Reagan condemned the policy during a speech at South Carolina's Bob Jones University, which had recently sued the IRS after losing its tax-exempt status because of the fundamentalist institution's ban on interracial dating.

Reagan's campaign appealed subtly but unmistakably to the racial hostilities of white voters. The candidate held his first post-nominating convention rally at the Neshoba County Fair near Philadelphia, Mississippi, the town where three civil rights workers had been murdered in 1964. In his speech, Reagan championed the doctrine of states rights, which had been the rallying cry of segregationists in the 1950s and 1960s. In criticizing the welfare state, Reagan had long employed thinly veiled racial stereotypes about a "welfare queen" in Chicago who drove a Cadillac while defrauding the government or a "strapping young buck" purchasing T-bone steaks with food stamps. Like George Wallace before him, Reagan exploited the racial and cultural resentments of struggling white working-class voters. And like Wallace, he attracted blue-collar workers in droves.

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With the wind at his back on almost every issue, Reagan only needed to blunt Carter's characterization of him as an angry extremist. Reagan did so during their only debate by appearing calm and amiable. "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" he asked the American people at the conclusion of the debate. The answer was no. Reagan won the election with 51% of the popular vote to Carter's 41%. (Independent John Anderson captured 7%.) Despite capturing only a slim majority, Reagan scored a decisive 489-49 victory in the Electoral College. Republicans gained control of the Senate for the first time since 1955 by winning 12 seats. Liberal Democrats George McGovern, Frank Church, and Birch Bayh went down in defeat, as did liberal Republican Jacob Javits. The GOP picked up 33 House seats, narrowing the Democratic advantage in the lower chamber. The New Right had arrived in Washington, DC.

## V. The New Right in Power

In his first inaugural address Reagan proclaimed that "government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem." In reality, Reagan focused less on eliminating government than on redirecting government to serve new ends. In line with that goal, his administration embraced "supply-side" economic theories that had recently gained popularity among the New Right. While the postwar gospel of Keynesian economics had focused on stimulating consumer demand, supply-side economics held that lower personal and corporate tax rates would encourage greater



*Harkening back to Jeffersonian politics of limited government, a viewpoint that would only increase in popularity over the next three decades, Ronald Reagan launched his campaign by saying bluntly, "I believe in states' rights." Reagan secured the presidency through appealing to the growing conservatism of much of the country. Ronald Reagan and wife Nancy Reagan waving from the limousine during the Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C. on Inauguration Day, 1981. [Wikimedia](#).*

private investment and production. The resulting wealth would "trickle down" to lower-income groups through job creation and higher wages. Conservative economist Arthur Laffer predicted that lower tax rates would generate so much economic activity that federal tax revenues would actually increase. The administration touted the so-called "Laffer Curve" as justification for the tax cut plan that served as the cornerstone of Reagan's first year in office. Keynesian logic viewed tax cuts as inflationary, stifling the economy. But Republican Congressman Jack Kemp, an early supply-side advocate and co-sponsor of Reagan's tax bill, promised that it would unleash the "creative genius that has always invigorated America."

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The tax cut faced early skepticism from Democrats and even some Republicans. Vice president George H.W. Bush had belittled supply-side theory as “voodoo economics” during the 1980 Republican primaries. But a combination of skill and serendipity pushed the bill over the top. Reagan aggressively and effectively lobbied individual members of Congress for support on the measure. Then on March 30, 1981, Reagan survived an assassination attempt by a mentally unstable young man named John Hinckley. Public support swelled for the hospitalized president. Congress ultimately approved a \$675-billion tax cut in July 1981 with significant Democratic support. The bill reduced overall federal taxes by more than one quarter and lowered the top marginal rate from 70% to 50%, with the bottom rate dropping from 14% to 11%. It also slashed the rate on capital gains from 28% to 20%. The next month, Reagan scored another political triumph in response to a strike called by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). During the 1980 campaign, Reagan had wooed organized labor, describing himself as “an old union man” (he had led the Screen Actor’s Guild from 1947 to 1952) who still held Franklin Roosevelt in high regard. PATCO had been one of the few labor unions to endorse Reagan. Nevertheless, the president ordered the union’s striking air traffic controllers back to work and fired more than 11,000 who refused. Reagan’s actions crippled PATCO and left the American labor movement reeling. For the rest of the 1980s the economic terrain of the United States—already unfavorable to union organizing—



*The Iranian hostage crisis ended literally during President Reagan’s inauguration speech. By a coincide of timing, then, the Reagan administration received credit for ending the conflict. This group photograph shows the former hostages in the hospital before being released back to the U.S. Johnson Babela, Photograph, 1981. [Wikimedia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DF-SN-82-06759.jpg), <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DF-SN-82-06759.jpg>.*

shifted decisively in favor of employers. The unionized portion of the private-sector workforce fell from 20% in 1980 to 12% in 1990. Reagan’s defeat of PATCO and his tax bill enhanced the economic power of corporations and high-income households; the conflicts confirmed that a conservative age had dawned in American workplaces and in politics.

The new administration appeared to be flying high in the fall of 1981, but other developments challenged the rosy economic forecasts emanating from the White House. As Reagan ratcheted up tension with the Soviet Union, Congress approved his request for \$1.2 trillion in new military spending. Contrary to the assurances of David Stockman—the young supply-side disciple who headed the Office of Management and Budget—the combination of lower taxes and higher defense budgets caused the

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national debt to balloon. By the end of Reagan's first term it equaled 53% of GDP, as opposed to 33% in 1981. The increase was staggering, especially for an administration that had promised to curb spending. Meanwhile, Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker continued his policy from the Carter years of combating inflation by maintain high interest rates, which surpassed 20% in June 1981. The Fed's action increased the cost of borrowing money and stifled economic activity.

As a result, the United States experienced a severe economic recession in 1981 and 1982. Unemployment rose to nearly 11%, the highest figure since the Great Depression. Reductions in social welfare spending heightened the impact of the recession on ordinary people. Congress had followed Reagan's lead by reducing funding for food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, eliminated the CETA program and its 300,000 jobs, and removed a half-million people from the Supplemental Social Security program for the physically disabled. The cuts exacted an especially harsh toll on low-income communities of color. The head of the NAACP declared the administration's budget cuts had rekindled "war, pestilence, famine, and death." Reagan also received bipartisan rebuke in 1981 after proposing cuts to Social Security benefits for early retirees. The Senate voted unanimously to condemn the plan, and Democrats framed it as a heartless attack on the elderly. Confronted with recession and harsh public criticism, a chastened White House

worked with Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neil in 1982 on a bill that restored \$98 billion of the previous year's tax cuts. Despite compromising with the administration on taxes, Democrats railed against the so-called "Reagan Recession," arguing that the president's economic policies favored the most fortunate Americans. This appeal, which Democrats termed the "fairness issue," helped them win 26 House seats in the autumn Congressional races. The New Right appeared to be in trouble. (By the end of Reagan's first term it equaled 53% of GDP, as opposed to 33% in 1981.) Meanwhile, Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker continued his policy from the Carter years of combating inflation by maintain high interest rates—they surpassed 20% in June 1981. The Fed's action increased the cost of borrowing money and stifled economic activity.

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## VI. Morning in America

Reagan nimbly adjusted to the political setbacks of 1982. Following the rejection of his Social Security proposals, Reagan appointed a bipartisan panel to consider changes to the program. In early 1983, the commission recommended a one-time delay in cost-of-living increases, a new requirement that government employees pay into the system, and a gradual increase in the retirement age from 65 to 67. The commission also proposed raising state and federal payroll taxes, with the new revenue poured into a trust fund that would transform Social Security from a pay-as-you-go system to one with significant reserves. Congress quickly passed the recommendations into

law, allowing Reagan to take credit for strengthening a program cherished by most Americans. The president also benefited from an economic rebound. Real disposable income rose 2.5% in 1983 and 5.8% the following year. Unemployment dropped to 7.5% in 1984. Meanwhile, the “harsh medicine” of high interest rates helped lower inflation to 3.5%. While campaigning for reelection in 1984, Reagan pointed to the improving economy as evidence that it was “morning again in America.” His personal popularity soared. Most conservatives ignored the debt increase and tax hikes of the previous two years and rallied around the president.

The Democratic Party, on other hand, stood at an ideological crossroads in 1984. The favorite to win the party’s nomination was Walter Mondale, who had been a staunch ally of organized labor and civil rights as a senator during the 1960s and 1970s. He later served as Jimmy Carter’s vice president. Mondale’s chief rivals were civil rights activist Jesse Jackson and Colorado Senator Gary Hart, one of the young Democrats elected to Congress in 1974 following Nixon’s downfall. Hart and other “Watergate babies” still identified as liberals but rejected their party’s faith in activist government and embraced market-based approaches to policy issues. In so doing, they conceded significant political ground to supply-siders and conservative opponents of the welfare state. Many Democrats, however, were not prepared to abandon their New Deal inheritance. The ideological tension within the party played out

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in the 1984 primary campaign. Jackson offered a largely progressive program but won only two states. Hart's platform—economically moderate but socially liberal—inverted the political formula of Mondale's New Deal-style liberalism. Throughout the primaries, Hart contrasted his “new ideas” with Mondale's “old-fashioned” politics. Mondale eventually secured his party's nomination but suffered a crushing defeat in the general election. Reagan captured 49 of 50 states, winning 58.8% of the popular vote.

Mondale's loss seemed to confirm that the new breed of moderate Democrats better understood the mood of the American people. The future of the party belonged to post-New Deal liberals like Hart and to the constituency that supported him in the primaries: upwardly mobile, white professionals and suburbanites. In February 1985, a group of centrists formed the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) as a vehicle for distancing the party from organized labor and Keynesian economics while cultivating the business community. Jesse Jackson dismissed the DLC as “Democrats for the Leisure Class,” but the organization included many of the party's future leaders, including Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. The formation of the DLC illustrated the degree to which to the New Right had transformed American politics.

Reagan entered his second term with a much stronger mandate than in 1981, but the GOP makeover of Washington, DC stalled. The Democrats regained

control of the Senate in 1986 (Republicans maintained a majority in the House,) Democratic opposition prevented Reagan from eliminating means-tested social welfare programs; however, Congress failed to increase benefit levels for welfare programs or raise the minimum wage, decreasing the real value of those benefits. Democrats and Republicans occasionally fashioned legislative compromises, as with the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The bill lowered the top corporate tax rate from 46% to 34% and reduced the highest marginal rate from 50% to 28%, while also simplifying the tax code and eliminating numerous loopholes. Both parties—as well as the White House—claimed credit for the bargain and celebrated the bill as a significant achievement. The steep cuts to the corporate and individual rates certainly benefited wealthy individuals, but the legislation made virtually no net change to federal revenues. In 1986, Reagan also signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act. American policymakers hoped to do two things: deal with the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the United States while simultaneously choking off future unsanctioned migration. The former goal was achieved (nearly three million undocumented workers received legal status) but the latter proved elusive.

One of Reagan's most far-reaching victories occurred through judicial appointments. He named 368 district and federal appeals court judges during his two terms. Observers noted that almost all of the appointees were white men. (Seven were African American, fifteen

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were Latino, and two were Asian American.) Reagan also appointed three Supreme Court justices: Sandra Day O'Connor, who to the dismay of the religious right turned out to be a moderate; Anthony Kennedy, a solidly conservative Catholic who occasionally sided with the court's liberal wing; and arch-conservative Antonin Scalia. The New Right's transformation of the judiciary had limits. In 1987, Reagan nominated Robert Bork to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. Bork, a federal judge and former Yale University law professor, was a staunch conservative. He had opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, affirmative action, and the *Roe v. Wade* decision. After acrimonious confirmation hearings, the Senate rejected Bork's nomination by a vote of 58-42.

## VIII. Bad Times and Good Times

Working- and middle-class Americans, especially those of color, struggled to maintain economic equilibrium during the Reagan years. The growing national debt generated fresh economic pain. The federal government borrowed money to finance the debt, raising interest rates to heighten the appeal of government bonds. Foreign money poured into the United States, raising the value of the dollar and attracting an influx of goods from overseas. The imbalance between American imports and exports grew from \$36 billion in 1980 to \$170 billion in 1987. Foreign competition battered the already anemic manufacturing sector. The appeal of government bonds likewise

drew investment away from American industry.

Continuing an ongoing trend, many steel and automobile factories in the industrial Northeast and Midwest closed or moved overseas during the 1980s. Bruce Springsteen, the bard of blue-collar America, offered eulogies to Rust Belt cities in songs like "Youngstown" and "My Hometown," in which the narrator laments that his "foreman says these jobs are going boys/and they ain't coming back." Competition from Japanese carmakers spurred a "Buy American" campaign but also caused flare-ups of violent xenophobia. In 1982, two autoworkers in suburb Detroit fatally bludgeoned Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American engineer they reportedly mistook for Japanese. Chin's murder was extreme, but economic strain caused social tension throughout the industrial heartland. Meanwhile, a "farm crisis" gripped the rural United States. Expanded world production meant new competition for American farmers, while soaring interest rates caused the already sizable debt held by family farms to mushroom. Farm foreclosures skyrocketed during Reagan's tenure. In September 1985 prominent musicians including Neil Young and Willie Nelson organized "Live Aid," a benefit concert at the University of Illinois's football stadium designed to raise money for struggling farmers.

At the other end of the economic spectrum, wealthy Americans thrived thanks to the policies of the New Right. The financial industry found new ways to earn staggering profits during the Reagan years. Wall

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Street brokers like “junk bond king” Michael Milken reaped fortunes selling high-risk, high-yield securities. Reckless speculation helped drive the stock market steadily upward until the crash of October 19, 1987. On “Black Friday,” the market plunged 800 points, erasing 13% of its value. Investors lost more than \$500 billion. An additional financial crisis loomed in the savings and loan industry, and Reagan’s deregulatory policies bore significant responsibility. In 1982 Reagan signed a bill increasing the amount of federal insurance available to savings and loan depositors, making those financial institutions more popular with consumers. The bill also allowed “S & L’s” to engage in high-risk loans and investments for the first time. Many such deals failed catastrophically, while some S & L managers brazenly stole from their institutions. In the late 1980s, S & L’s failed with regularity, and ordinary Americans lost precious savings. The 1982 law left the government responsible for bailing out S&L’s out at an eventual cost of \$132 billion.

## XI. Conclusion

Reagan left office in 1988 with the Cold War waning and the economy booming. Unemployment had dipped to 5% by 1988. Between 1981 and 1986, gas prices fell from \$1.38 per gallon to 95¢. The stock market recovered from the crash, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average—which stood at 950 in 1981—reached 2,239 by the end of Reagan’s second term. Yet, the economic gains of the decade were unequally distributed. The top fifth of households enjoyed rising

incomes while the rest stagnated or declined. In constant dollars, annual CEO pay rose from \$3 million in 1980 to roughly \$12 million during Reagan’s last year in the White House. Between 1985 and 1989 the number of Americans living in poverty remained steady at 33 million. Real per capita money income grew at only 2% per year, a rate roughly equal to the Carter years. The American economy saw more jobs created than lost during the 1980s, but half of the jobs eliminated were in high-paying industries. Furthermore, half of the new jobs failed to pay wages above the poverty line. The economic divide was most acute for African Americans and Latinos, one-third of whom qualified as poor. Trickle-down economics, it seemed, rarely trickled down.

The triumph of the right proved incomplete. The number of government employees actually increased under Reagan. With more than 80% of the federal budget committed to defense, entitlement programs, and interest on the national debt, the right’s goal of deficit elimination floundered for lack of substantial areas to cut. Between 1980 and 1989 the national debt rose from \$914 billion to \$2.7 trillion. Despite steep tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the overall tax burden of the American public basically remained unchanged. Moreover, so-called regressive taxes on payroll and certain goods actually *increased* the tax burden on low- and middle-income Americans. Finally, Reagan slowed but failed to vanquish the five-decade legacy of economic liberalism. Most New Deal and Great Society proved durable. Government

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still offered its neediest citizens a safety net, if a now continually shrinking one.

Yet the discourse of American politics had irrevocably changed. The preeminence of conservative political ideas grew ever more pronounced, even when as controlled Congress or the White House. Indeed, the Democratic Party adapted its own message in response to the conservative mood of the country that accepted many of the Republicans' Reagan-era ideas and innovations. The United States was on a rightward path.

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# HIST 212

## U.S. History 1865 to Present

2nd Edition

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The Unit Notes for this course found in the OER are based on class notes taken during the years in which the instructor was a student in undergraduate and graduate lecture courses or seminars at East Stroudsburg University and Kent State University (circa 1987-1999). When information beyond those notes is referenced in the Unit Notes, the source on which it is based is mentioned.



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